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PRECARIOUS PIPES: GOVERNANCE, INFORMALITY, AND THE POLITICS OF ACCESS IN KARACHI

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THE POLITICS OF ACCESS IN KARACHI

A Dissertation Presented

by

USMAAN MASOOD FAROOQUI

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DEDICATION

For Abba and Amma

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This dissertation is the product of a transnational group of people who have contributed their time, ideas, and actions towards a sometimes ambiguous goal. I offer my sincerest gratitude to them here for helping me bring that goal to fruition.

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ABSTRACT

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THE POLITICS OF ACCESS IN KARACHI

SEPTEMBER 2020

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This dissertation looks beyond narratives of the chaotic urban south to examine the politics of city planning and everyday service access in Pakistan. I draw on a case study of Karachi, what is perceived to be one of the world's most unruly cities, to demonstrate how planning enables the representation of political order. Drawing on field research in the city, I also explore the materialities, subjectivities, and histories of service access that remain uncaptured by official discourses in this context.

I begin by tracing how Karachi's postcolonial planners have, for decades, described the rapidly expanding city as an object of correction. While early master plans sought to order and control Karachi's physical form, planners in the 1980s, in line with a shift in global development ideas, sought to normalize already existing urban spaces through legalization and bulk service provision. Advocating "slum improvement" policies, planners thus presented the so-called informal city as integral to urban renewal, development, and governance. In doing so, planners both discursively produced the

formal and informal city and presented this dichotomy as crucial to Karachi's urban order.

In contemporary Karachi, however, such representations of the city in artifacts such as maps and government ordinances, elide and exist alongside ongoing processes of urban stasis and transformation. I therefore subsequently turn attention to everyday politics in the city by exploring how Karachi's residents access a service crucial for survival: water. Drawing on seven months of field research, I show how the urban poor and low-level state officials navigate and reproduce the city's fickle hydrologies. I also focus on how Karachi's residents utilize the formalized domain of electoral politics as an avenue for material claim making in order to counteract their everyday precarity.

Karachi's postcolonial past and millennial present shows how political authority discursively (re)constitutes itself out of the very materialities that challenge its existence. The everyday coping mechanisms and temporally-bound electoral politics of access and belonging, in turn, demonstrates how the urban poor manage urban uncertainty while continuing to stake their right to the city.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

A NOTE ON TRANSLATION

All interviews and fieldnotes have been translated and transcribed by me. In certain cases, I have included both the English translation of a word or phrase as well as the Urdu words spelled out in English letters in parenthesis. This is done in instances where an English translation cannot convey the full meaning of a phrase without additional context and explanation. Certain Urdu words used by state institutions in official discourses have been translated once and then italicized and repeated in the text without concurrent translation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> The architecture profession thought not so long ago that it knew how to design
> cities and that its obligation was to design cities and to teach how to design cities.
> At the same time, we are surrounded by cities that you would call unpleasant.
> Nobody can design cities anymore; or rather the cities that people know how to
> design are completely different from the cities that architecture considers
> legitimate and organised. So, whether we want to or not, we are basically
> confronted with a phenomenal amount of evidence of the redundancy and even
> the absurdity of our profession. It's a really deeply tragic situation.
>
> - Rem Koolhaas, 2017[1]

Today, the world is in a state of crisis brought on by urbanization. The United Nations'

(2019) World Urbanization Prospectus estimates, for instance, that 55% of the world's

population currently lives in cities. This figure is expected to rise to nearly 69% by the

year 2050 with the Global South bearing the brunt of future urban growth. For notable

urbanists like the architect Rem Koolhaas, the contemporary moment reveals the hubris

in any attempt to plan growing cities. Indeed, as urbanization continues at an exponential

rate, planners, particularly in the so-called developing world, are faced with the seemingly

impossible task of ordering vast tracks of urban sprawl that have emerged in the space of

a few short decades. That national, regional, and local governments struggle to provide

affordable housing, reduce poverty, and develop infrastructures for essential services

suggests the sheer pace of urban growth has outstripped even the possibility of planning

in the Global South.

In contrast to such narratives of the chaotic city, this dissertation draws on a case

study of Karachi, Pakistan, to explore the rationalities and power-laden effects of urban

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[1] As cited in Gibson (2017)

planning practices.[2] Once described as the "City of Lights" due to its vibrant culture, contemporary Karachi is a snarl of congested streets, so-called slum settlements, and patchy access to basic urban services. According to *The Economist's* 2018 Global Livability Index Karachi is one of the world's ten least livable cities. This, according to the report, is due to a lack of formal housing and unreliable access to water, sanitation, and transport. For instance, a 2016 United States Institute of Peace report claims that in "2012 an estimated 55 percent of [Karachi's] population were living in unplanned or only partially planned areas" (USIPS, 2016: 9). Civil society actors and urban activists, in turn, see this as evidence of a politicized and failed planning process (see Hasan, 2000; Hasan et al., 2013; Sayeed et al., 2016).

But technocrats, military dictators, and elected governments have consistently sought to plan Karachi as one of the world's premier metropolitan areas. Since the independence of Pakistan in 1947, a variety of detailed master plans have successively aimed to "modernize" the city, develop it as an economic powerhouse, or transform it into a "world-class" urban area. In this dissertation, I turn attention away from the implementation of these urban plans to instead explore the rationalities undergirding their conception. I argue that while planning initiatives in Karachi have certainly failed to shape the city's streets, housing societies, business districts, and service infrastructures as "legitimate and organized" (in Rem Koolhaas' words), they have nevertheless enabled a novel claim about the existent of order. Indeed, faced with waves of unplanned migration, Karachi's governors have long described the city's ad-hoc housing settlements as disordered and chaotic. But, rather than seeking to eliminate or otherwise overcome this perceived disorder, city planners have both reproduced narrative of urban ad-

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[2] I draw here on a long tradition of critical scholarship both within planning theory (Beauregard, 1986, 2015; Flyvbjerg; 1996; Roy, 2009; Yiftachel, 1998) and the social sciences in general (Ferguson, 1994; Foucault, 1991; Scott, 1998) which see "technical" practices – such as development, measurement, and standardization – as depoliticized manifestations of power relations.

hocism, unregulated social and political relationships, and societal illegibility, as well as describe these forms of urbanism as integral to the work of everyday governance.

At the same time, this dissertation also shows how the narratives of planners are hopelessly out of step with the lived urban materialities, subjectivities, and histories of urban communities. In turning ethnographic attention to everyday water access in Karachi, this dissertation thus also explores the disjuncture between representations of Pakistan's largest city and the messiness of everyday life therein.[3] It does so not to demonstrate that things are always more complicated than official discourses suggest, but to shed light on the banal and, indeed, spectacular actions and discourses through which Karachi is made, remade, and contested.

The Ideal City: Governmentality, Legibility, and Formalization

What is the process through which societies, cities, and social groups come to be ruled? In his now seminal lectures at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault (1991, 2010) described "governmentality" as a technique of governance emerging in 18th century France in which rule was rationalized. Central to Foucault's thesis was a new understanding of power whereby, rather than being exercised in direct, often violent interventions by a sovereign, power was dispersed throughout society by various technologies of control. Foucault argued that this "art of government" was based on an increasing reliance on enumerative techniques such as cartography, population censuses, statistics, and the creation of social categories as diverse as economic growth and madness. Such technologies enabled rule precisely because they became dispersed in the everyday operation of society, expanding the traditional sphere of government to include people's subjectivities, habits, and beliefs. As power created subjects who governed

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[3] For an enlightening, ethnographic overview of how residents living at Karachi's peripheries access water, potable or otherwise, see Anwar et al. (2019).

themselves and were willing to be governed by others, it enabled the work of government through indirect, diffuse means. For Foucault, the culmination of this process of shaping individual conduct in desirable ways was rule becoming "governmentalized… elaborated, rationalized, and centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions" (Foucault, 1982b: 793, emphasis added).

Foucault's unique understanding of power has since been developed and extended to describe the relationship between rationality, urban planning, and rule.[4] For instance, James Scott (1998: 3) has argued that a central problem to solve in matters of governance is societal illegibility, and that modern states therefore seek to rule by "standardizing and rationalizing… a social hieroglyph." The legible city, a crucial component of state strength, operates at the level of both simplified state-society relations, wherein the state views its population through readable technologies such as maps, population registers, and standardized units of measurement, as well as simplified physical space (Ibid: 24). For the latter, Scott notes how during 19th and 20th urban planning the "straight line, the right angle, and the imposition of international building standards were all determined steps in the direction of simplification" (Ibid: 109). According to Scott, urban planners have long attempted to overcome the spatial unintelligibility of pre-modern cities, seeking to transform indecipherable networks of local knowledge, diverse social practices, and unsystematic physical space into a "simple, repetitive logic [that] will be easiest to administer and police" from the outside (Ibid: 55). Scott describes nineteenth

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[4] In his influential thesis on the "dark side of planning", for instance, Bent Flyvbjerg (1996) explores the relationship between power, rationality, and spatial control. Though often described as a process of development, reform, and improvement (see Hall, 2014; Pearce, 1992), Flyvbjerg argues that planning is a power-laden activity which rulers use to govern, direct, and otherwise control their populations and territory. Moreover, as much of the scholarly work on the urban South shows, planning has long been a form of historical and ongoing social oppression (Sarin, 2019). Planning might prioritize elite economic interests in land redevelopment over needs like housing and equitable service provision (Rajagopal, 2010; Zad, 2013), reproduce class, racial, and gender-based hierarchies (Frisch, 2002; Jacobs, 1996; Sandercock and Forsyth, 1992; Weisman, 1994), and in some cases create the conditions for violence and disorder (Davis, 2014).See, also, Lewi and Wickham (1996), Scott (1998), Watson, (2009a), and Yiftachel (1998) for critical perspectives on urban planning.

century Chicago as an exemplary case where the "logic of the grid" made rule from "above and outside" by a faceless state apparatus possible (Ibid: 43). The grid, for instance, secured the state's monopoly on violence by allowing it to locate and crush urban insurgencies while also making administrative tasks such as taxation, transportation, and public service provision simpler.[5]

Where the spatial organization of cities is concerned, it is thus impossible to overstate the *material* character of urban governmentality. Creating self-governing subjects, as Stephen Collier (2011: 7) writes, means that rulers seek to regulate the "biological, social, and economic life of their subjects." [6] Roads, water supply systems, sanitation networks, and communication technologies, as well as the more intangible legal, economic, and cultural rationalities that regulate their operation are intrinsic to the process through which rule becomes dispersed throughout society. Such infrastructures are essential to how the state infiltrates and orders society to create self-governing, legible, and rationalized subjects.[7] A critical aspect of urban governmentality therefore lies in establishing what Stephen and Graham (2001) call the "modern infrastructural ideal" – centralized, sociomaterial systems for water, sanitation, and other services that make rule possible by giving cultural, economic, legal and political logics of rule a consistent material form.[8] Historical examples regarding the consolidation of liberal rule point to

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[5] Crucially, Scott is careful to note that attempts to fully rationalize society have failed precisely because they ignore the host of "informal practices and improvisations" (Scott, 1998: 6) that define any "real, functioning social order."

[6] Foucault himself (1986b) saw extending infrastructures for water and sanitation as critical to urban order in 18th century Europe in as much as this controlled outbreaks of disease and social revolts. For studies linking governmentality to the expansion of water and sanitation, see Bakker (2013), Boelens et al. (2015), Hellberg (2014), Morales et al. (2014), and Rodgers et al. (2016).

[7] For instance, Michael Mann (1984) argues that state power stems from its unique characteristics as a "socio-spatial organization" that is able to know and regulate a territorially defined area. What makes state authority unique is the capacity to infiltrate society and enforce policy through "infrastructural power", or various sociomaterial organizational networks developed and regulated by the state itself (Soifer and vom Hau, 2008: 222).

[8] An empirically and theoretically rich scholarship demonstrates how various material and immaterial infrastructures create the legal, spatial, and ideological basis for state rule (see Larkin, 2013 for an overview). Through quotidian engagements with pipes, roads, and sewerage systems people constitute themselves as citizens or subjects, understand and contest their relationships

the tacit, yet effective ways in which city planning, in as much as it entailed extending water, sanitation, and electricity infrastructures enabled the diffuse work of governance. Cities like London, Manchester, and Los Angeles – as well as colonial Calcutta – for instance, were made more governable through what Patrick Joyce (2003) calls the "rule of freedom." Here, politicians, planners, and architects idealized the city as a place where the free individual, unmoored from the pre-modern trappings of feudalism, would engage in the unobstructed circulation of information, goods, and people. Yet, this vision of the liberal city is precisely what Joyce argues justified interventions in society as sanitation and waterworks projects sought to cultivate and, indeed, control the free urban dweller.[9]

If modern rule is achieved by rationalizing physical space and social relations, then Karachi's seemingly illegible and disorderly landscape of ad-hoc housing settlements and decrepit service infrastructures suggests a lack of systematized governance.[10] For civil society activists, these areas are a symptom of ineffective planning in the face of rapid urbanization (Hasan, 2000; Hasan et al., 2013:19).[11] Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, the city has faced successive waves of migration including from Muslims refugees in the post-partition era, rural families during industrialization policies in the 1970s, Afghan refugees during the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s, and internally displaced persons from Northern Pakistan during the post-9/11 War on Terror. With Karachi's growth constantly outstripping plans to accommodate hopeful settlers in well-designed housing communities complete with urban services, there has been an exponential rise in what state authorities call "*katchi abadis*", or areas that state officials describe as having

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with power and authority, and create larger (if unintended) political effects through daily infrastructural practices (Collier, 2011; Nucho, 2017; Von Schnitzler, 2016).

[9] For legibility beyond the context of the urban North, see Lee (2014), Nasritdinov (2016).

[10] For James Scott (1998) illegibility is a source of political autonomy. Here, however, I draw attention to Scott's somewhat implicit claim that the lack of legibility and order points to a failed or incomplete project of rule.

[11] Karachi is not along in this regard. Urbanization and globalization has shaped the planning and nature of cities across the Global South (see Elsheshtawy, 2010; Gilbert and Gugler, 1992).

been developed without the support of formal institutions or legally recognized non-state actors.[12] Officials see these areas as having been developed by migrant communities themselves who often bribe state officials to settle on state-owned land (see Gazdar and Mallah, 2011 for a critique of such a dichotomy in Karachi's context). As such, *katchi abadis* are also described as being part of Karachi's growing "informal sector" – where relationships and practices that are not regulated by formal rules, codified institutional practices, and legal frameworks are common.[13] As such, the persistent *lack* of formalization – or ordered and rationalized sociomaterial space – in Karachi's *katchi abadis* may be seen as evidence of a lack of order and a failed planning process..[14] It is here however, that postcolonial perspectives of state power and governance provide an alternate way of thinking about Karachi's so-called informal areas.

Urban Peripheries: Postcolonial Governmentality and State Power

In her remarkable work *City Requiem*, Ananya Roy (2003) offers ethnographic insight into how rulers actively utilize extralegality to govern. In her research at Calcutta's ever-changing eastern fringes, Roy finds that the lack of land records and maps – a common occurrence in postcolonial bureaucracies – means that legibility as "a tool by which

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[12] A rich and growing body of scholarship explores how official descriptions of urban space are themselves political (see Ghertner, 2015). Concurrently, I do not seek to describe "*katchi abadis*" as objectively existing spaces in Karachi, but a categorization of urban space used by state officials to denote certain assumed characteristics of (usually low-income) housing settlements.

[13] There is a rich tradition of scholarship on informality in the social sciences (see Roy, AlSayyad, 2004 for an overview). Here, I use this term to highlight the formal/informal dichotomy that reflects a preoccupation with legality/illegality amongst urban planners and civil society activists, especially in Karachi (see Hasan et al., 2013). For many urban scholars, such a "dichotomization" is itself an expression of state power (Boudreau and Davis, 2017). I do not suggest here that informality is not an enduring feature of cities in the urban North (see Duneier and Carter, 2001; Haid, 2017; Polese et al., 2016; Wacquant, 2006). Moreover, informality as a concept is inherently useful in that it permits otherwise difficult comparisons between the urban North and South (see Hilbrandt et al., 2017; Ranganthan and Balazs, 2015). Rather, I draw attention to how informality has largely emerged as a theoretical concept from an analysis of the urban South itself (see Roy and AlSayyad, 2004).

[14] I follow Boudreau and Davis (2017) use of the term "formalization" to move beyond the development bias in terms like modernization and capitalization.

modern states supervise and articulate their territories" – is missing (Ibid: 135). For Roy, the absence of such official representations raises questions about how physical space is governed amidst competing land claims between state officials, political parties, developers, and rural communities (Ibid: 137). Roy finds an answer in the paradoxical process of "vesting" where land is controlled through the "convergence of both legality and extralegality in the same process" (Ibid: 161). Writes Roy:

> As a tool, vesting allows the legal intervention of the state in land transactions and service provision. But as an indeterminate mechanism, vesting makes possible the extralegal intervention of the [political] party to negotiate the ownership and use of land, shielding the state from public scrutiny. The party does what the state cannot do. It encourages land invasions, exacts electoral discipline, and maintains political loyalties. The state does what the party cannot do. It deploys its legal authority to provide infrastructure, to selectively regularize titles, and to evict when necessary. Vesting, then, is not simply a bureaucratic tactic but instead a field of constant and ceaseless negotiation of de facto and de jure rights, formal and informal claims. (Roy, 2003: 161).

Roy's focus on vesting inverts the Foucauldian knowledge/power nexus which critical studies of urban planning see as facilitating depoliticized forms of social control (see Flyvbjerg, 1996; Scott, 1998; Watson, 2009b; and Yiftachel, 1998). Here, the capacity to rule does not stem from the state's ability to render its territory legible and hence intervene in its operation, but by its ability to "unmap" physical space in order to use legal and administrative ambiguities to its advantage (Ibid: 135). With a paucity of official knowledge – maps, urban plans, and legal titles – the state's official apparatus works with non-state actors such as brokers, patrons, and political parties to selectively provide urban services, change land use provisions, or evict entire communities for development purposes.[15]

Roy's account of Calcutta more generally shows that the state often operates outside its own formally and legally circumscribed domain of action. Roy's description of

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[15] No doubt, the state already possesses great powers of territorial control. While land fuzziness gives it territorial flexibility in controlling the ambiguous urban-rural periphery, in Karachi, like in much of the urban South, the threat of evictions exists regardless of a settlement's planned or legal nature (see Ghertner, 2015).

postcolonial state power thus provides an important counterbalance to Foucauldian-inspired accounts that highlight the rationalized expansion of everyday rule (see Kalia, 1988).[16] Whereas the latter emphasizes legibility and increased formalization as a crucial (and often lacking) component of everyday social and political order in the urban South, Roy describes extralegality as a unique form of state power (see Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018: 2142). Rather than infiltrating society through rationalized, sociomaterial infrastructures for water, sanitation, and other services, Roy describes how rule is achieved through flexible and contested constellations of the state's formal apparatus and non-state actors such as political parties that together discipline and control urban populations. Indeed, writing in the context of India in general, Roy (2009: 81) argues that *planning* is not characterized by "technologies of visibility, counting, mapping, and enumerating", but by the "relationship between the published plan and unmapped territory." Here, the "state" as a continuous regime of various actors seeks to enact whatever it deems as appropriate urban policy. Read in this light, Karachi's *katchi abadis* can be thought of as "zones of exception" (Giorgi and Pinkus, 2008; Ong 2007) where the banal and spectacular work of governance is carried out by a diverse set of actors that blur the lines between state and society.

In theorizing the messiness of urban life, Roy's work demonstrates the theoretically and empirically untenable dichotomies of legal/illegal; formal/informal; and state/nonstate that planners and a number of scholars use to make sense of postcolonial contexts. Nevertheless, while Roy offers an alternative to Eurocentric notions of urban governance (or the lack thereof), she says little about whether or how the "technologies of visibility, counting, mapping, and enumerating" play a role in the planning of rapidly

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[16] Studies of governmentality has long been applied to (and complicated by) the colonial context (Anderson, 2004; Arnold, 1993; Mitchell, 2002).

expanding cities.[17] Yet, the importance of these practices is particularly significant given how city space in often described in contemporary Karachi based on a fixed set of categories. Looking in from its urban peripheries, the city is demarcated into areas that are described as either "planned" or "unplanned" (Ahmed, 2008). The former are areas that planners claim have been developed legally by state institutions such as the military or non-state actors. These areas, often based on a grid layout, are further assumed to exist within and function according to the laws, codified rules, and official procedures of the formal city. By contrast, the city's katchi abadis, which planners see as having been developed through ad-hoc and sometimes illegal practices such as bribery are described as haphazard and disorganized according to traditional understandings of urban planning in which the city's ordered form is paramount for governance (see Laquain, 2006). As described by one commentator, these areas are "developed by 'land grabbers' who illegally take public land and develop it for residential purposes...[providing] services, such as water, through informal means" the consequence of which lies in "public utilities [losing] their relevance in the expanding urban landscape of Karachi, with huge loss of potential revenues" (Anwar, 2014). And yet, while many such katchi abadis are deemed illegal, many others have a distinct legal status. Indeed, since the 1980s, planners have pursued development and improvement policies through which katchi abadis may be provided legal tenure and access to bulk infrastructures. In Karachi, then, amidst "planned", legal and formal areas, there are also spaces that are partially planned or formalized in the eyes of state officials.

What role, if any, does planning – conceived of as an effort to order and structure physical space and social relations – play in such a context? What implications might this

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[17] Roy's case study of Calcutta, a city that has had only one master plan throughout its history, is telling in this regard. It is important to note that Roy's later work (2009) addresses planning in the India context.

have for our understanding of how state power is performed and secured? How, if at all, does planning shape the *material* nature of urban politics?

Research Arguments: Techno-Political Discourses

For experts and technocrats, the work of urban planning is associated with achieving a normative good. As Oren Yiftachel (1998: 3) writes, planning "emerged out of the unacceptable and inhumane living conditions prevalent in the rapidly expanding industrial cities of the 18th and 19th centuries." As such, planning is always directed toward increasing the public good. The work of creating ideal cities, however, first involves defining the contours of urban utopia. In the United States and Britain, for instance, the public good in the 18th and 19th centuries was defined as improving the lives of urban dwellers by creating hygienic, well-serviced cities (Burgess, 1993; Cherry, 1988). More recently, the public good has been defined in ways such as "environmental justice" (Raymond et al., 2016; Wolch et al., 2014), a revitalization of the arts (Chang, 2000; Vanolo, 2008) and urban "resilience" in the face of climate change (Ahern, 2011, 2013; Pickett et al., 2004). For critical perspectives, however, the ability to define and pursue the public good is itself a political process because it invariably associates progress with a privileged set of assumptions, ideas, and concepts. The notable works of Bruce Braun (2014), James Ferguson (1994), and James Scott (1998), for instance, demonstrate how the seemingly apolitical, technical practices of development and urban planning are based on Eurocentric notions of progress that, when understood as signifying objective notions of advancement, reproduce power relations between technocrats and everyday populations (Ferguson, 1994); rulers and their subjects (Scott, 1998); and, on a broader scale, the Global North and South (Braun, 2014).

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Crucial to these power relations is their ability to function as empowered discourses. For instance, in his remarkable work Encountering Development, Arturo Escobar (2012 [1994]) demonstrates how the technical work of development in the post Washingtonconsensus era functions as a discursive field. Examining how the rapidly decolonizing Global South was described as a subject of reform by former colonizing nations in the 20th century, Escobar argues that the notion of "development" is based on a set of assumptions about social progress that are presented as ontological givens by practitioners. The "problematization of poverty" (Ibid: 21) and its solution through free market liberalism for instance, claims Escobar, are evidence of how the discursive field of development both defines the problem of underdevelopment and its prescription in terms of a set of economic practices that themselves emerged through the historical experiences in the Global North. When interventions invariably fail due to their inability to account for the everyday lifeworlds of their development objects the discourse of development finds ammunition to justify ever more interventions. Thus, writes Escobar, development functions as an empowered discourse through which social groups, cultural practices, and entire countries are represented as objects of constant correction.

Escobar's work is significant because it shows that "techno-representations" (Ibid: 213) of progress that are embedded in practices such as development and planning are, rather than mirror images of an ontological reality, inherently political discourses. In what follows, I therefore move away from viewing planning as a technical practice that is liable to fail in weak institutional contexts like Karachi. Instead, I suggest we view planning as an empowered discourse of development that is based on a privileged set of assumptions and concepts regarding urban revitalization in the Global South more generally. Promoted (and funded) by multilateral actors like the World Bank, such an approach to planning has emerged as a popular response to urbanization in cities such as Karachi, Mumbai, and Nairobi. As cities continue to grow without formal oversight, planners

have come to favor post-hoc "formalization policies" that seek to extend legal frameworks and rules to preexisting urban spaces that state officials describe as unplanned or undeveloped (Durand-Lasserve. 2006; Kamete, 2013; Laquian, 1984; Mukhija, 2001; Smart and Smart, 2017; Varley, 2002).[18] In recent years, a particularly widespread example of such formalization policies has been "slum improvement" initiatives, which planners and development practitioners argue are an inclusive and proven way to manage unplanned urbanization. Focusing on land titling, this approach provides legal and technical support to the urban poor while encouraging them to improve their living conditions through grassroots and community-based initiatives such as building drainage systems, securing potable water, and fortifying housing structures.

Examining slum improvement as a discourse of development, I seek to shed light on how planners represent a megacity like Karachi through technical narratives of urban improvement. In Karachi, I argue that under slum improvement the work of planning has shifted from formalizing the city's built form through material practices like eviction, to discursively reproducing and normalizing its perceived disorganization as crucial for urban governance. Indeed, the turn toward slum improvement has set up discursive bifurcation between the laws, rules, and procedures of the overarching regulatory state and the unregulated social structures, relationships, and practices of everyday communities that supposedly exist parallel to formal authority. In setting up this dichotomy, planners not only reproduce distinctions between what the so-called formal and informal city, they also present this dichotomy as a whole as crucial to governance tasks like everyday service provision. Focusing on how Karachi's governors understand and represent the city through such dichotomies, I argue that the work of planners, in both producing and, indeed, normalizing the city's "informality", is imbricated in how

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[18] Urban and national level efforts such as regulating street hawkers and land titling have become a popular way to address unplanned urbanization in the Global South. See Björkman (2014), Comelli et al. (2018), Georgiadou (2016), Ranganathan (2018) and Weinstein (2008).

political authority claims its legibility of physical territory and, by extension, discursively performs the existent of order.[19]

Yet, while representations of the ordered city rely on a neat partition between the formal and informal city, such a categorization of Karachi does little to reflect the messy, lived realities of Pakistan's largest urban area. As much of the recent literature in urban studies demonstrates, dichotomies between the formal and informal city – or for that matter, civil and political society; the static and kinetic city; and the legal and illegal city respectively – are theoretically and empirically untenable when it comes to the "fluidity of urban life" (Anand, 2017: 68. See also, Boudreau and Davis, 2017; Björkman, 2015; Furlong, 2014; Ghertner, 2015; Simone, 2006; Naqvi, 2017). In Karachi, too, life is not characterized by a clear distinction between the regulatory state on one hand, whose role is limited to providing bulk services and land titles, and everyday grassroots and community based organizations that enact everyday development goals such as service provision within geographically defined islands of deregulation.[20] Instead, it is characterized by a variety of sociomaterial practices that transcend a discursive dichotomy between the formal and informal city as seen by planners. One need only look at how a critical urban resource like water is secured to see the how the laws, official land use categories, and codified procedures of the regulator state exist in a symbiotic,

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[19] In using the term "discursive" here, I do not suggest that representations of rule in Karachi are somehow immaterial. Rather, I refer to the *modality* through which order is constructed and evidenced. Such modalities include artifacts like maps, legal documents, and master plans, all of which reproduce the city's space as an object of legibility. For instance, in her widely influential work Karen Barad (2003; 2007) has argued that distinctions between material and discursive worlds are products of Newtonian scientific work, and that scholars should turn focus to "material-discursive" practices to explore how matter and meaning intertwine to reproduce the world in terms of Cartesian dualities. Here, appearance is far from immaterial. Producing master urban plans, for instance, is an inherently *material* effort that requires, among other things, physical practices of measurement based on pre-given conceptually defined categories such as "legal." These "material-discursive" practices produce artifacts like maps, in turn, represent what is considered "real."

[20] I draw attention here to how order is not only a product of formalized, legalized, and state-sanctioned conventions, but can spring from everyday practices of social groups as well (Coburn, 2011; Gayer, 2014; Spector, 2017).

overlapping relationship with the subjectivities, relationships, and material practices of everyday urban communities. In Karachi, there exists a disjuncture between representations of the bifurcated formal and informal city and the everyday rhythms of urban life through which many of Karachi's residents make the work of everyday settlement possible. Exploring this disjuncture, I make three further claims related to state-society relations and popular politics as experienced in the postcolony.

First, I demonstrate that the state as a web of power relations (Mitchell, 1991) reproduces itself by creating, out of the very material realities that might challenge its claim to order, technical categories that it presents as part of its legal and procedural domain. Specifically, by demonstrating how *katchi abadis* are constructed as a legal social category in their own right, I show how planners both reproduce narratives of disorderly and disorganized urban spaces and utilize them to present Karachi as a whole an object of legibility.

Second, in contrast to critical and postcolonial scholarship that sees urban "informality" as a space of political insurgence and resistance (Chatterjee, 2004; Scott, 1998), I demonstrate how a focus on the meanings associated with unregulated practices like patronage and water vending in Karachi shed light on how the poor understand their precarity. In making this argument, I do not suggest that the concept of informality ought then to be singularly associated with narratives of marginalization and consent to power (see Auyero and Swistun, 2008). Rather, I demonstrate that informality as an "experience near" concept (Geertz, 2001; Schaffer, 2016) affords a more holistic and conscientious understanding of so-called subaltern lifeworlds.

Finally, I demonstrate the ways in which urban populations use elections as institutionalized – albeit brief – moments of political action. Specifically, I show how the ability to appropriate or make one's own – what Simone (2006) usefully refers to as "pirating" – electoral discourses allows Karachi's urban poor to not only rearticulate

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their demand to live as deserving citizens of the city, but put formal institutions to work for themselves in ways uncaptured by theories of liberal democratic politics.

In the pages that follow, I therefore explore both how the work of urban planning shapes Karachi's urban space in discursive terms, and the material realities through which the city is made, remade, and actively contested.

Research Design and Methodology

In *Ordinary Cities*, Jennifer Robinson (2006: 2) makes the case that "we think about a world of ordinary cities." Robinson's argument is not that cities as diverse as Karachi, New York, and São Paulo be considered the same; it is quite the opposite. For Robinson, viewing cities as ordinary allows us to recognize and move past the western development bias in contemporary urban studies. Cities like Karachi are not *abnormal* because they do not conform to a Eurocentric standard of the urban. Rather, like all cities, they are "dynamic and diverse, if conflicted, arenas for social and economic life" (Ibid). Robinson's call to normalize the very different trajectories of development both within and across the global north and south is a welcome intervention that requires a matching methodological approach.

Logical positivism, because it treats people and their social practices as objects with essential features that can be compared and generalized across space and time (King et al., 1994), is ill suited to address the specificities of Karachi's urbanism. I therefore adopt an interpretivist approach that is sensitive to the contextualized meanings individual ascribe to everyday social practices. Such a methodology is grounded in the presupposition that the world is intersubjectively created, and that knowing it requires interpretation; rather than hierarchically ranked study goals, understanding and explaining are intertwined in a singular epistemic strategy (Yanow, 2014). Such an "ethnographic

sensibility" (Schatz, 2009) is not limited to a single method or source of data. Instead, it extends across the board of methods used by the researcher and applies to data gathered from observing social practices, conducting interviews, as well as analyzing official documents, government reports, newspaper articles, and fieldnotes.

My goal is therefore not to make causal claims; rather, I seek to uncover the *causes* – understood as contextual, meaning-laden clues about "*why* individuals respond to their worlds as they do" – of distinct social and political phenomenon (Schwartz-Shea, 2014: 141, my emphasis). Moreover, while I do not aim to discover generalizable truths, I nevertheless see the notion of the general as significant to this research in two ways. First, I seek to provide sufficiently detailed descriptions regarding the goals, procedures, and insights of this study so that they may be "transferred" where appropriate to other studies (Ibid). Second, I see Karachi as a city with a unique history that is nevertheless participating in what Bendix and Geertz (1974) call a "general movement in history" (cited in Adcock, 2014: 93). As urbanization runs rampant across the world, it comes into contact with contextual and historical particularities. Studying such "world-making" projects in context thus provides an opportunity to explore how generalized historical movements lead to different social and political outcomes (Tsing, 2000).

This dissertation is based on 3 years of research (2017-2020) of which seven, non-contiguous months were spent conducting fieldwork in Karachi.[21] When I first began researching Karachi, I was interested in exploring the relationship between urbanization and urban violence.[22] Given its history of unplanned urbanization, institutional deadlock, and ethnic cleavages, policymakers and popular discourses described Karachi as a future site for violence over limited water resources. But Pakistan's largest city had yet to

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[21] I visited Karachi a total of four times between this period.

[22] For instance, scholars argue that alongside patchy housing, environmental degradation, and unequal public service access, urbanization in the Global South created the threat of "civic" conflict (Beal et al., 2013). This is defined as a uniquely urban phenomenon where otherwise healthy civic engagement turns violent as increasing demand for limited urban resources, like water, outpaces the state's ability to provide public services.

experience notable instances of rioting, protests, and intercommunal violence despite an escalating water crisis. As such, I focused on studying Karachi as a "most-likely crucial case" for violent conflict over water (Levy, 2008: 232). My very first fieldwork trip in early 2017 therefore revolved around selecting a fieldsite that would provide analytical leverage in explaining the puzzling lack of civic conflict over water in Pakistan's largest, most notoriously conflict-prone city. As a low-income, unplanned and water-stressed housing settlement at the city's urbanized southwest, the settlement I call "Samandar Colony" was an ideal choice; it contained many of the causal drivers, such as persistent social cleavages and weak state institutions, that scholars of urban conflict and "environmental security" more generally argued led to violence (see Beall et al., 2013; Detges, 2017; Gleick, 2014; Homer-Dixon, 2006; Kahl, 2008). Crucially, however, the settlement remained free of any observable, violent conflict over water.[23]

But, as I learned about Samandar Colony's fickle hydrologies and situated them within its legal, institutional, and historical context as a legalized (regularized) unplanned settlement, my initial puzzle gave way to broader questions about the politics of urban planning, rule, and everyday service access in a fragile city.[24] Water, a substance that is "intensely political in the conventional sense: implicated in contested relationships of power and authority" (Bakker, 2012: 616), thus turned out to be a remarkably useful way to think about the two overarching questions that began to structure my research; 1)

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[23] In the following chapters, I shift attention from much of the scholarship on Karachi and beyond that focuses on the urban periphery (Ahmed and Sohail, 2003; Hasan, 1995; 2000; 2002; Nausheen, 2014; Soliman, 1996; Young and Keil, 2010 Ahmed and Sohail, 2003; Hasan, 1995; 2000; 2002). Instead, I draw attention to settlements within postcolonial Karachi provide as a new empirical context in which to explore how state power is enacted and received.

[24] There is a rich, multidisciplinary scholarship that emphasizes the materiality of water in shaping the social world. Studies in political ecology show how water's distinctive materiality both enable and produces tensions within the economic, legal, political and moral structures of societies (Gandy, 2004; 2014; Kaika, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2004; 2015). As an object crucial to everything biopolitical, water has for centuries enabled the project of colonial and modern rule itself (Gilmartin, 2015; Haines, 2015; Meehan, 2014). At the same time, as a material that leaks, flows, and floods, water constantly escapes the control of human designs and thus engenders new possibilities and avenues of discovery (Neimanis, 2014).

what, if anything, is the relationship between urban planning and rule in Karachi? And 2) how are everyday political economies of access and belonging received and contested by urban populations in the city? Initially selected as a most-likely case for a research puzzle about the lack of civic conflict, Samandar Colony quickly turned into an *abductively* selected site which provided learning opportunities that could address an evolving set of questions.[25] My continued engagement with the settlement was thus a research exercise characterized by an "iterative-recursive fashion between what is puzzling and possible explanations for it" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012: 27). An abductive logic of discovery followed me beyond Karachi as well. While at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, I constructed and analyzed two datasets using Nvivo 11 that would further aide in answering the questions I was developing; the first, a "planning archive" consisting of 20 official documents including city plans as well as Government of Sindh acts, regulations, and ordinances covering the period 1952 – 2007(see appendix A); the second, a "discourse archive" consisting newspaper articles over the period 2001 – present (N>500). Articles were collected from a variety of English language newspapers including *Dawn, The Express Tribune, The Nation, The News, and The Herald.*[26]

I employed three study distinct procedures as part of my abductive logic of discovery. First, I used textual analysis on my planning archive. Applying an ethnographic sensibility to official state documents such as city plans, laws, and public ordinances, my goal was to explore the distinctly political work – in terms of how certain concepts and understandings were privileged over others in representing the city – done by these

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[25] Unlike either deduction or induction, abduction signifies a "nonlinear, path-dependent process of combining efforts with the ultimate objective of matching theory and reality" (Dubois and Gadde, 2002: 556). Abduction thus recognizes that the research process is every-changing, messy, and subject to changes based on "serendipitous" discoveries made in real time (Rivoal and Salazar, 2013).

[26] I did not peruse Urdu language newspapers because my goal was to explore "official discourses" about Karachi. Given that English is the language used in courts, laws, and planning/policy documents, these newspapers were far more representative of how official language was presented in popular discourse.

technical texts (Schatz, 2009). I also used textual analysis on my discourse archives. Unlike official documents which I treated as political artifacts, I used newspapers as "cultural texts" (Gupta, 1995: 377) that represented how issues like planning, service access, and elections were spoken about in Karachi. My goal was to contextualize findings from my field research within these public discourses.

Second, I conducted 44 semi-structured interviews with 75 interlocutors. Interviews were conducted at the neighborhood level with families and community leaders in Samandar Colony; the institutional level with Karachi Water and Sewerage Board workers and management; and finally at a technical level with retired city planners and civil society activists (see appendix C). More than just using interviews to gather information about issues such as water access, the conversational format of my interviews – while guided by a common set of questions (appendix B) – was aimed at eliciting the meanings my interlocutors assigned to their lived experiences.[27] My goal was not to accept and thereby privilege the understandings I encountered. Rather, it was to construct a coherent account of how my interlocutors understood their lifeworlds. Finally, my interviews were not based on a sampling logic which seeks to secure a small-n, representative slice of a given population group. Rather, they were based on a case study logic in which interviews were conceived of as cases in themselves (Small, 2009). Each interview was thus conducted with the goal of more accurately understanding a cohesive whole. Different actors thus provided new insights, further extrapolated older points of interests, or confirmed my understanding of an ongoing social process.

Finally, I used participant observation as an overarching tool for immersion. My use of this method was not limited to a singular fieldsite; for instance, I did not stop observing Karachi when I left Samandar Colony after a day's work. Though the

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[27] Conversational interviews, for instance, allow for a "mutually negotiated" style of interrogation which is sensitive to how different participants understand and respond to a single question (Soss, 2014).

settlement's narrow allies and its pumping station was where I recorded the bulk of my observations, I continued to observe as I drove around Karachi, conducted phone calls with interlocutors, engaged with family members and friends, and travelled between Pakistan and the United States. Not all observations were directly related to my research questions. Nevertheless, in constantly reorienting my "line of sight" (Pachirat, 2007) observations garnered from different viewpoints provided a way to triangulate and contextualize data collected from the fieldsite. Interview transcripts and fieldnotes were stored in Nvivo 11 where I developed a codebook to systematically code emerging concepts (appendix D).

In addition to these theoretical, ontological, and epistemological considerations, my methodology and research design is also a product of my identity as a "semi-indigenous researcher" (Shehata 2014: 211) conducting research in my hometown of Karachi. My social position as a native of the city both intentionally and subconsciously shaped critical aspects of my research such as ontological presuppositions, methods, and choice of fieldsite. For instance, as a native Urdu speaker who translated findings to English, I naturally gravitated toward an interpretivist ontology that was sensitive of how everyday words and phrases were uniquely expressive of cultural meanings (Schaffer, 2012; 2016). My position as a Pakistani male from a comfortable socioeconomic background meant that I had a preexisting network of contacts to secure access to Karachi's low-income settlements. My choice of Samandar Colony as a fieldsite, while based on the presence of theoretical parameters associated with water conflict, stemmed from the fact that my family's maid had lived in the settlement for decades. I deliberatively chose this fieldsite because it allowed me to visit people in their homes and talk to women in a socially conservative society, tasks that would otherwise require time – regardless of my ability to communicate fluently in Urdu and my appearance as Pakistani.

Of course, my identity also posed a significant epistemological challenge; I was at risk of considering normal what a non-indigenous researcher might consider surprising (see Ward et al., 2016). For instance, it was not odd to me that Karachi received water on a staggered supply system rather than a 24/7 one where the city's pipes were constantly pressurized. Had I ignored the immediate surprise of colleagues in the United States who learned this information, I would most likely have overlooked a significant insight embedded in my fieldnotes; the politics behind changing pumping schedules as well as how negotiated schedules shed light on the diverse set of practices through which Karachi's hydrologies were reproduced. My trips back to the United States in the fall and spring semesters between the period 2017-2019, during which time I collected archival materials, transcribed interviews, and coded fieldnotes, thus became critical to the overall epistemological process. These trips allowed me to keep learning about my home of Karachi by constantly making the city "strange" (Ybema and Kamsteeg, 2009).

Chapter Overview

I begin by contextualizing the process and examining the logic under which Karachi has come to be represented as ordered, structured, and systematically ruled. Chapter two thus explores the work of city planners who tried to curb, control, or otherwise direct the city's growing space during its postcolonial trajectory. While earlier initiatives focused on demolishing what planners called "*katcha*" (impermanent) settlements, the 1970s marked an important turning point with planners stressing the need to legalize (with tenure) these areas and develop their service infrastructures.[28] Karachi's planners were by no means pioneers in this regard. Instead, they were following broader shifts in development discourses in the 1970s that emphasized "slum improvement" in an urbanizing world

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[28] Of course, legal status alone is insufficient in protecting against evictions (Hasan et al., 2013). The salient point, however, is that that regularized areas are "mapped" in significant ways precisely because the state reproduces and maintains their legibility rather than their ambiguity.

(see Turner and Fischer, 1972; van Horen, 2000 for an overview). Enacted under the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act, the shift to legalization was not just a formalization policy that sought to develop rather than destroy "*katcha*" settlements. It was also a broader initiative that produced "regularized *katchi abadis*" as a unique category of land use where legalization and state support would go hand in hand with improvisation, local agency, and practical knowledge in the ongoing work of urban development.[29] Regularized *katchi abadis* were thus evidence of how planners discursively separated the so-called formal and informal city while simultaneously incorporating these distinctions under a singular logic of urban growth management. As planners embraced this new approach, legal documents, regulations, and cartographic tactics became the discursive tools which constructed regularized *katchi abadis* as unique settlements that were at once legible, legal, and rationalized parts of the formalized city *and* a space for "informal practices and improvisations" (Scott, 1998: 6). As such, the city's once incoherent landscape, at least according to traditional understandings of urban planning, was now incorporated under a singular logic of order, and thus produced as legible, knowable, and *governed*. As chapter two further shows, regularization policies have proved resilient by molding to fit ever-changing global discourses of urban redevelopment. As such, the construction of regularized, and indeed "non-regularized" *katchi abadis* in Karachi not only enables a novel rationality of rule in which so-called unplanned space is discursively presented as known and governed, it also becomes a way for political authority to construct and incorporate within its formal, legal domain new social categories that, at first glance, might seem to be at odds with the modern state.

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[29] A list of *katchi abadis* and their legal status in Sindh can be found at https://sindh.gov.pk/dpt/SKAA/status%20of%20katchi.htm. These figures are considered outdated by civil society actors because they do not account for the increase in unplanned settlements after 1985. Studies based on field surveys and elite interviews, for instance, place the total number of unplanned settlements eligible for "regularization" at 702 with only 376 being "notified" as being processed of 2010 (Hasan et al., 2013:19).

But while Karachi is certainly represented as ordered, structured, and governed in various artifacts, everyday life in the city is far more haphazard, uncertain, and precarious. The city's residents must simultaneously navigate laws, official procedures and state bureaucracies on one hand, and cultural relationships like patronage, improvised material practices, and unregulated political economies of service access on the other. The three subsequent chapters thus turn ethnographic attention to the material-discursive exigencies of everyday life in Karachi by focusing on how residents of a settlement I call Samandar Colony negotiate daily access to a good essential for survival: water.

Chapter three begins by revisiting the puzzle that initially framed the fieldwork for this dissertation; why is Karachi characterized by a lack of civic conflict over water despite the state's failure to effectively provide this precious resource? Indeed, Samandar Colony is a likely-case for such water-related conflict given its regular potable water shortages and underlying social tensions. To explain what I call the settlement's continuing "hydraulic order", this chapter explores the settlement's development history shedding light on the multiple overlaps between the formal regulatory state – its rules, laws, and representatives – and the relational forms of access and belonging like friendship and kinship that have always been part of Samandar Colony's social fabric. Such overlaps are particularly apparent in the fickle and uncertain relationships, practices, and procedures through which water is accessed in Hindu Para – an old part of the settlement. In such circumstances, small-scale water vending has emerged as the most common and reliable method of access. But, while theories of market-based orders in development discourse celebrate small-scale vending practices as necessary, residents of Hindu Para bemoan the extreme social and financial burdens of having to purchase water daily. How, then, does water vending persist without instances of rioting, protests, and intercommunal conflict? The second half of this chapter answers this question by describing vendor water as a coping mechanism – distinct from both political quiescence

and everyday resistance – that Hindu Para's residents purposively adopt to produce a livable environment.

Chapter four zooms out of Samandar Colony to focus on water access at the level of bulk supply. This level of analysis turns attention to the material *and* social infrastructures through which the settlement's water supplies – thousands of gallons weekly – are counted, secured, and distributed to distinct "pumping zones" in a staggered supply system. In particular, chapter four focuses on Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) "machine operators" who work at Samandar Colony's sole pumping station amidst considerable uncertainty. This uncertainty stems from various sources; machine operators must not only contend with failed motors, misadjusted valves, and errant pumping schedules, they must *also* navigate the demands of a turn-based ("*wārī*") distribution system in which local leaders constantly seek to secure water for their respective "pumping zones." This chapter proceeds to describe how everyday knowledge about Samandar Colony's water levels and pumping schedules becomes crucial for access in these circumstances. Yet, as machine operators produce and circulate such alternate knowledge, they also perform the role of "neutral" state officials. These neutral performances play out in how machine operators set up a distinction between *their own*, technical work of dealing with water board schedules, setting valve positions, and maintaining pumping motors on one hand, and *others'* political ("*siyasī*") work of allocating bulk water supplies for different parts of the settlement on the other. Chapter four shows how, in staying clear of the latter, KWSB machine operators – though integral to ensuring the flow of water – are also implicated in reproducing Samandar Colony's wider hydraulic uncertainty.

Chapters three and four collectively shed light on the daily conventions and meanings through which Karachi's precarious hydrologies are made and remade. These everyday lifeworlds lie at the disjuncture between the representation of urban order on one hand

and the sociomaterial arrangements through which life in the city is made possible on the other. In shedding light on this urban bricolage, chapters three and four demonstrate how "informality" – often associated with bottom-up agency and the subversion of power relations (Appadurai, 2002; De Soto, 2000; Scott, 1998) – is rather evidence of how the urban poor understand and cope with their own precarity without necessarily challenging the status quo through their everyday actions.

The final empirical chapter returns attention to Samandar Colony's residents amidst Pakistan's 2018 general elections. This chapter is split in two halves; the first explores elections as temporal, institutionalized instances of political action where Karachi's urban poor engage in negotiation and contestation – however briefly – to demand better urban services, jobs, and security. As I argue, such demands are not evidence of vote buying, but of how Samandar Colony's residents stake their claim to live in the city as decent citizens. The second half of this chapter focuses on the fortunes of one political party in particular during the 2018 general elections: the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). Asking why the TLP carved out a significant electorate even as it campaigned on nothing more than a vague notion of religious governance captured in the phrase "*Khatm-e-Nubuwat*" or "Finality of the Holy Prophet", I argue that support for the party is not, as popular and scholarly accounts suggest, evidence of a pious urban population voting its preferences in Karachi's fundamentally altered, post-2016 electoral landscape. Instead, it is evidence of how Samandar Colony's residents actively appropriated the TLP's discourses to rearticulate demands for everyday urban services, jobs, and security. In demonstrating these arguments, chapter five sheds light on the meaningful ways in which Karachi's urban populations put formal institutions to work for themselves – both by directly negotiating exchanges of votes for particularistic benefits and by indirectly articulating their demands for these services – in ways that are not captured by liberal democratic accounts of electoral politics in South Asia.

This dissertation does not take a normative position on planning itself as a technical practice. While managing and directing cities certainly has a "dark side" (Flyvbjerg, 1996) in that it has the potential to spatialize class, racial, and gendered logics as well as enact mass social control, such practices are also capable of creating what my interlocutors called "*sunwai*" – a hearing and accounting of claims and desires. During my time in Karachi, residents of Samandar Colony argued that well-organized systems for water access, sanitation, housing, and other services, when overseen by responsible state officials would make it possible to live less precarious lives – a minimal yet strongly held desire that many families expressed. For those who stand to benefit from it, planning is thus understood as a powerful force for social and economic justice. In setting out these two very different sides of the same coin, *Precarious Pipes* seeks to show that planning should not simply be rejected as a project that, despite its failures, facilitates the expansion of hegemonic rule (Scott, 2000). Instead, in a rapidly urbanizing world, planning might also serve as an arena for social and political equalization. The potential for such equalization, though certainly entailed in social groups actively taking part in various development projects ostensibly meant to benefit them, is also apparent in how planning provides a common language for such groups to understand and hence grapple with the scale of their own marginalization.

CHAPTER 2

"FORECOURT OF THE NATION"

Resettlement, Regularization, and Rule

> I don't even think people in the local government department of Sindh know what is going on [right now]. First, ad-hocism used to be like this: "There is 400 million gallons of water available. Some *sahib* [lord/sir] has come to Clifton, so send 100 million gallons there to avoid mayhem. It's hot!" That was ad-hocism. Now, ad-hocism is such that the laws, the rules – everything – is amended, molded, bent on a daily basis to suit one set of requirements or the other set of desires.
>
> – Former city government official[30]

For retired state officials, civil society activists, and urban planners, Karachi is the prototypical failed city. I wasn't surprised, then, when a former high-ranking city government official I interviewed in 2017 described Karachi as "ungovernable." This assessment was based on comparing present Karachi to an earlier time where urban governance was characterized by a reliable system of elitism. As the official implied, whereas before the rules of the game were relatively well-known, Pakistan's largest city was now a Gordian knot of competing political and economic interests that had little regard for the rule of law. As if to further explain the difference between an acceptable past and an unscrupulous present, the official lamented that "before, at least it was possible to tell the difference between good and bad." Yet, it wasn't the official's description of and distinction between a previous, vestige of colonial governance and a current situation of political corruption that intrigued me. Instead, it was his description of Karachi as always somehow being governed through improvised or makeshift efforts.

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[30] Interview June 31st, 2017.

The official's use of the word "ad-hocism" in this respect was a powerful descriptor of Karachi's postcolonial history as well as its millennial present because it pointed to the perpetual failure of top-down city planning.
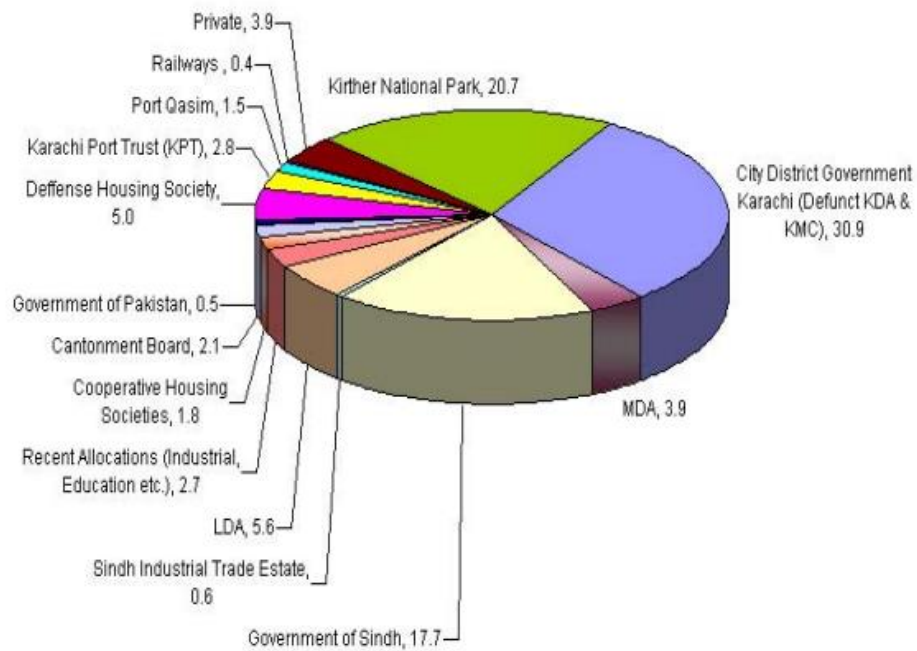
Figure 2.1: Karachi land owning agencies (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007).

One needn't look further than the fragmented nature of land ownership in Karachi to grasp the impossibility of planning in Pakistan's largest city (figure 2.1). As noted by the 2007 Karachi Strategic Development Plan (KDSP), the sheer number of land owning agencies in the city has created, among other problems, a "Lack of holistic and unified vision for the city, hampering the formulation and implementation of development plans… in [an] integrated manner" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007: 2). According to civil society reports, the "presence of numerous land-owning agencies with no shared plan or coordinating mechanism results in a serious clash of interests, frequent disputes over land transactions and conflicts between various parties" (Hasan et al., 2013:

vi). Millennial Karachi is therefore often viewed through narratives of fragmented political authority, a lack of planning, and failed governance.

Karachi's chequered history of urban development points to the consequences of failing to plan, rationalize, and govern a growing metropolis. Since 1947, the city has accommodated an estimated 20 million urban migrants (Gazdar, 2014). Rising housing demands coupled with the absence of a single, consolidated land authority means that over 50 percent of the population lives in areas that planners, politicians, and popular discourses refer to as "*katchi abadis*" or "unplanned" settlements that described as having been developed without the official support of state institutions (see Ahmed, 2008; Davis, 2007).[31] A majority of these settlements are situated on public land owned by a mélange of federal and provincial institutions, and are characterized by a lack of potable water and sanitation (Ahmed, 2008; Hasan, 2000). For instance, according to a 2019 World Resources Report titled *Unaffordable and Undrinkable* households in Karachi's *katchi abadis* receive potable water for an average of two hours – spread over three days – in a single week period (see Mitlin et al., 2019). From a planning perspective, such narratives suggest that Karachi's chaotic state can be assessed by looking at the presence (or lack thereof) of reliable, formalized (public or private) service delivery.[32] Popular discourses, in turn, describe how residents of *katchi abadis* live precarious, invisible lives in the assumed *absence* of state planning.[33] Scholars describe these areas as spaces where the urban poor use connections lying outside formal associations with state institutions to

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[31] Here and throughout, I use the term "unplanned" interchangeably with the term *katchi abadi* to denote how planners and state officials describe ad-hoc (usually low-income) settlements in Karachi. Far from being neutral, such descriptors come with considerable baggage in that they paint these areas as existing outside and parallel to the formal regulatory state.

[32] This is apparent in development scholarship that sees effective service delivery as a signal of strong state capacity (Levy and Kpundeh, 2004) as well as critical scholarship, described in chapter 1, which sees formalized, centrally controlled infrastructures for water and sanitation as evidence of the state's capacity to infiltrate society (see Mann, 1986; Stephen and Graham, 2001).

[33] For instance, a report published with the Middle East Institute describes Karachi as a "city within a city" where "informal processes and actors seem to have taken control to provide basic services to the burgeoning populations" (Nazia, 2012).

secure urban resources and services. With municipal institutions falling short, residents rely on the work of community organizations, cultural bodies such as *jirgas*, and even gangs to secure housing, access water, and ensure trash collection (see Gayer, 2014; Viqar, 2014).

For the city's planners, Karachi's *katchi abadis* are thus understood as spaces where cultural relationships, practices, and social forms exist *outside* and *parallel* to the state's formal, regulatory domain. Addressing such presumed "informality", in turn, has been the thread that unites much of Karachi's discordant planning history.[34] Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, postcolonial governments and military dictatorships have commissioned planners to reinvent the city as an economic, cultural, and political powerhouse by tackling what they saw as a growing number of *katchi abadis*. For instance, in the immediate confusion of post-partition migration, city officials and international consultants sought to remake Karachi as the "heart of Pakistan… the forecourt of the nation… enclosed by the House of Parliament, the principle Mosque, the Supreme Court of Justice and buildings for state authorities and cultural institutions" (MRV, 1967: 2). These planning attempts proposed to eradicate Karachi's burgeoning *katchi abadis*, and by extension, the unregulated political, economic, and social activities that were perceived to thrive therein. Earlier plans thus saw *katchi abadis* as illegal, backward, and undeveloped, thus justifying policies which evicted residents from public lands and resettled them at Karachi's vacant peripheries.

Justified by melding cultural narratives of progress with processes of capital reinvestment, housing demolitions, anti-encroachment drives, and wholescale evictions

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[34] In this chapter, I use the terms "informal" and "informality" to refer to "experience-near" concepts (see Schaffer, 2016) utilized by planners. Although recent studies have moved away from conceptualizing informality as a static phenomenon running parallel to the nation state to instead described it as a *process*, even a form of urbanization itself (see Boudreau and Davis, 2017; McFarlane, 2008; Roy, 2004), here, I highlight how Karachi's urban planners, but also development practitioners and civil society activists' preoccupation with the so-called informal sector as outside the domain of the regulatory state has consistently shaped visions of the city.

were (and are) a particularly violent response to urbanization in the Global South. Indeed, the redevelopment of so-called unplanned settlements is aimed at reasserting the writ of the state by rationalizing urban space as legal and formal.[35] But, while demolitions and eviction remain common in many southern cities (including Karachi), development discourses since the 1970s have also espoused the importance of "slum upgrading" (see (Laquian 1983, Payne 1984, Skinner et al. 1987). For instance, in his important work *Freedom to Build*, British architect John Turner's (with Fischer, 1972) argued that the local knowledge and situational awareness of so-called squatters should be privileged in housing initiatives. Drawing on his work in Peru, Turner claimed the state would be better off nurturing the agency of everyday populations living in unplanned settlements by providing legal tenure and technical support in terms of service delivery rather than implementing centrally planned development schemes that inevitably required a heavy-handed approach (usually involving eviction). The emerging logic, now common amongst development practitioners, is that effective urban development need not require expanding the state's formalized role in housing and service delivery (see UN-Habitat, 2007). Instead, urban populations should be given legal and institutional support in order to improve the living conditions they have themselves secured over several years of entrepreneurial, if extralegal activity.

Given this wider shift in development discourse, planners adopted an alternative approach to dealing with Karachi's so-called unplanned settlements in the late 1970s. Working in conjunction with development agencies like the United Nations Development Project (UNDP), city planners introduced a comprehensive ideological, legal, and institutional framework under which *katchi abadis* could be legalized and given state support in terms of infrastructural development. "Regularization", as it was called in the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act, protected *katchi abadis* from eviction, offered legal

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[35] See Smart and Smart (2017) for a useful overview of urban formalization in this regard.

land titles, and afforded access to bulk water and sanitation infrastructures. The act did so by declaring eligible settlements (those with 40 or more households constructed before a specified cut-off date) as "regularized *katchi abadis*" [legalized impermanent settlements].[36] Crucially, in a critical break from the resettlement policies of the past, planners also signaled the importance of local, community-based initiatives assumed independent of the state in everyday waterworks, sanitation, and housing projects. In short, the unregulated material practices and social structures which planners assumed thrived in *katchi abadis* and which they once sought to eliminate through aggressive resettlement were now seen as integral to democratizing and expanding access to urban services in Karachi.

In this chapter, I demonstrate how the shift from resettlement to "regularization" allowed planners to discursively produce and rationalize Karachi's landscape as *governed*. This was accomplished through the active construction of settlements as "regularized" and "non-regularized" *katchi abadis*. In this respect, the 1987 Katchi Abadis Act introduced a new category of land use known as "regularized *katchi abadis*." Planners described this category of land use as a knowable object in terms of physical attributes (number of household), a particularly history of development ("unplanned") and a particularly legal status under the 1987 act ("regularized"). Regularized *katchi abadis* were thus discursively produced as specific kind of unplanned, yet legalized urban space in Karachi that was distinguishable from other discursive land use categories including both "non-regularizable" *katchi abadis* [illegal unplanned settlements] as designated by the act and "planned" areas assumed to have developed under the auspices of state institutions. But, as "regularized" areas, planners simultaneously reproduced the perception that *katchi*

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[36] The term *katchi abadi* literally translates to "impermanent settlements." This term – particularly *kutcha* (impermanent) – has been used by city planners throughout Karachi's planning history to describe urban areas they *perceived* as unplanned – or existing outside state jurisdiction. While uses of this term from independence through to the 1975 Karachi Metropolitan Plan had no legal bearing, the term *katchi abadi* was introduces as a specific category of land use after the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abaids Act was passed.

abadis were unregulated spaces in the city. This played out most visibly in how regularized *katchi abadis* were to be developed once legalized. Specifically, the 1993 Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (Regularisation, Improvement, and Development) entailed an "external/internal" division whereby formal state institutions were responsible for providing bulk infrastructure for water and sanitation, while community organization and local actors were expected to facilitate service delivery projects within unplanned settlements. With this "internal" logic of development ascribed to them, regularized *katchi abadis* were simultaneously framed as unregulated – albeit innovative and entrepreneurial – spaces.

In empirically demonstrating these claims, this chapter shows how recent urban development initiatives in Karachi, while having done very little in terms of the state's capacity to infiltrate and control society have nevertheless enabled a discourse of rule in which narratives of disorderly and unregulated urban space are reproduced as constitutive of a formal system of governance. Karachi's vast physical territory is thus represented in terms of discursively constructed social categories, thus making an otherwise sprawling, dynamic, and politically fractured city legible "from above and outside" (Scott, 1998: 43). Such representations, moreover, are deeply implicated in how political authority rearticulates itself through artifacts like maps, legal documents, and government ordinances.

This chapter draws on an ethnographic analysis of official state documents, including Karachi's master plans, various legal acts, and urban governance ordinances. I also draw intermittently on civil society accounts and elite interviews with retired city planners. I focus on the rationality of rulers – and in particular city planners – who have sought to develop postcolonial Karachi in different political contexts. I proceed by describing the resettlement initiatives that characterized city planning in Karachi's immediate postcolonial context. The early resettlement policies of both civilian and military rulers

described the need for well-designed housing townships complete with formalized service delivery infrastructures, thus seeking to eliminate the "unplanned" spaces that planners and rulers saw as wreaking havoc during the early post-partition period. I then examine the critical juncture of the 1974 Karachi Development Plan in which planners identified "regularization" – or the legalization and improvement of so-called unplanned settlements – as a central policy for urban development. Emerging in a context where Pakistan's socialist-leaning civilian government came into contact with global discourses of "slum upgrading", the crux of regularization lay in ideologically separating unregulated social and economic practices from narratives of backwardness and presumed illegality. Instead, the 1974 plan highlighted how practices and relationships presumed to exist beyond the regulatory state were critical to Karachi's overall development. I subsequently turn attention to the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act and the 1993 Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (Regularisation, Improvement, and Development) Regulations, and the political work this legal and institutional framework accomplished in terms of creating an expanded typology of land use with which to make sense of Karachi. Finally, I explore how regularized and non-regularized *katchi abadis*, as social categories that made physical space legible, enabled a novel representation of Karachi as ordered and governed. I conclude this chapter by pointing to how this representation of Karachi as governed remains at odds with the lived experience of everyday communities, a theme I take up in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

Resettlement

In 1947, the newly created nation of Pakistan was poised as a country ready for industrialization and democratization. Karachi, at this time Pakistan's federal capital, was expected to be the engine that would facilitate Pakistan's development. Yet, Prime

Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin's civilian government faced a critical challenge in accommodating nearly 50% of the 600,000 Urdu-speaking refugees from India who were changing Karachi's demographic, political, and, indeed, physical landscape (Ansari, 2005).[37] The influx of refugees from India had created a number of settlements on public lands which, until 1952, had benefited from an official policy of toleration by state institutions (Hasan and Mohib, 2003). The first attempt to plan Karachi was thus undertaken by the newly formed Karachi Improvement Trust (KIT) with assistance from Swedish design and engineering consultants Merz Rendell Vatten (MRV). The result was the Greater Karachi Plan of 1952 (GKP), a comprehensive proposal outlining the city's potential development as a major political, economic, and cultural center up to the year 2000. The GKP's modernist underpinning were apparent in its comparison of Karachi's anticipated population growth, occupational makeup, and employment levels with the experience of western cities like Washington D.C. and Stockholm (MRV, 1967: 27). MRV's planners recognized that Pakistan was expected to catch up to the standard of living in Europe in roughly half a century. The GKP thus emphasized a need to control and shape the city's *form* in order to achieve comparable levels of industrialization, economic growth, and employment. According to MRV's planners, Karachi's physical form was crucial because it would:

> [Express] both the requirements and wishes of the individual and those of the social groups… provide for and emphasize the peaceful life in a residential area, the productive co-operation in the place of employment, the swarming life in the bazaar, the "joie de vivre" in the community center and the ideological tension in the large meeting places (MRV, 1967: 15).

To achieve its vision, the plan proposed that Karachi develop its port area for dockyard industries; its industrial districts for metal, mechanical, and building industries; its residential areas for housing, shops, and services; and its peripheries for a variety of

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[37] Under the 1948 draft plan which was quickly abandoned, refugees were largely ignored in favour of middle-class families and government workers (Sayeed at al., 2013).

public and private needs (Ibid: 32-33). In addition, the GKP proposed a detached administrative center towards the city's north as well as a university district, both of which would have smooth transport links to other parts of the city. As the GKP stated: "The new Capital and the existing central business section should be given the possibility of growing together into one common core" (MRV, 1967: 2). The GKP had a two pronged approach to address the refugee population as part of this overall physical development. The first was to develop high-density residential complexes within and close to the city center. MRV's planners noted that Karachi's already built up central district would most likely become a center for employment and, hence, house a population of roughly 1.5 million (Ibid: 55). The GKP proposed developing apartment complexes within and close to the city's center to house some of Karachi's refugee population. The second, more long-term plan was to clear what MRV officials described as "*kutcha*" [impermanent/unplanned] housing settlements and resettle communities in government-sponsored housing schemes on Karachi's outskirts. These proposed housing schemes, particularly on the Lyari riverbed towards the western periphery, were not only to accommodate refugees living within the city, but also serve urban migrants in the future:

> In general, clearance can only be brought about by increasing the height of buildings and by replacing districts now covered with huts by high blocks of flats. The area that comes first to mind in this contest consists of Lyari Quarters and adjacent districts, but the same applies, of course, to many other existing areas with a "kutcha" settlement of poor buildings… the new districts… The new districts should be prepared for the reception of the section of the population now living in very bad circumstances in the inner city, as well as for the expected increase in the population of Karachi (MRV, 1967: 114).

Up to 60,000 units were proposed as part of this resettlement strategy (Hasan, 2000). MRV's planners argued that the state's apparatus would have to play a major role in resettling populations not only given the costs associated with constructing high-rise complexes, but also to ensure that "scattered groups of low-storeyed permanent houses"

– which planners saw as natural outcome of urban populations settling if left to their own devices – were not permitted in any of the areas earmarked for redevelopment and resettlement (MRV, 1967: 114). In a complete reversal of toleration policies, MRV's planners proposed eviction and resettlement as a major step in achieving Karachi's desired long-term physical form. Clearing "*katcha*" settlements would transform Karachi's scattered periphery, "consisting of tents and huts without sanitary conveniences", into well-planned residential district where "parks, schools, hospitals and other public services [would] be introduced" (Ibid: 114).
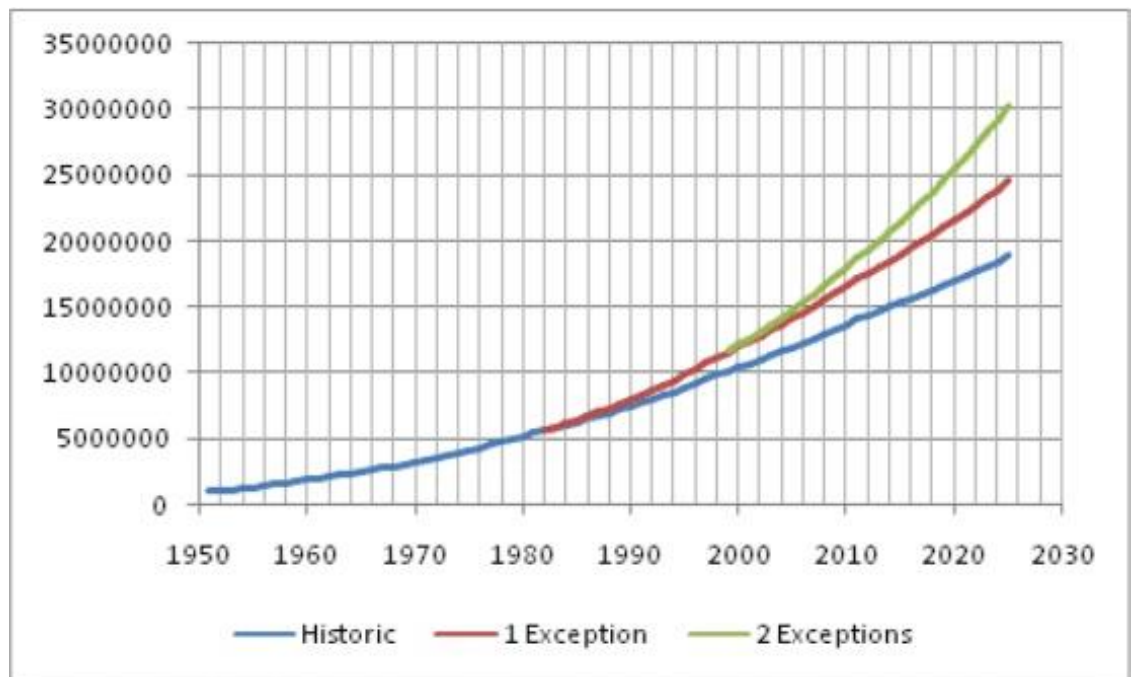
Figure 2.2: Population growth in Karachi (Gazdar, 2014)

Despite its meticulous planning, the GKP was not fully implemented. This was for two reasons. First, the plan itself was hopelessly outdated in the face of Karachi's burgeoning refugee population. For instance, MRV's planners assumed that the city's population would reach the 3 million mark by the year 2000, leaving only a number of 400,000 as a margin of error. As figure 2.2 above shows, Karachi crossed the 3 million

mark sometime in the mid-1960s, well before the anticipated half century timeline! Additionally, Pakistan experienced its second stint of military rule under General Ayub Khan beginning in 1958. General Ayub was quick to shift the federal capital from Karachi to Islamabad in Punjab, thereby rendering the GKP's main proposal and planning hook – an all-important administrative center – moot (Hasan and Sadiq, 2004). Nevertheless, while Karachi's western periphery and inner city remained a home for migrant and refugee populations, the GKP had important implications for future planning in that it was the blueprint for subsequent physical development. In particular, the GKP's emphasis on eviction and resettlement as a strategy to handle urbanization continued to shape Karachi's peripheries for the better part of the next three decades.

By 1957, Karachi's governing structure had undergone a significant change with the KIT having been converted into the Karachi Development Authority (KDA). While KDA was made responsible for land development, the Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC), a body originally formed in 1934, was made responsible for providing public services and otherwise maintaining developed urban land. Armed with this new separation of powers, and given Ayub Khan's reported disapproval of slums, the military dictatorship commissioned a new plan to address Karachi's skyrocketing growth. The resulting Greater Karachi Resettlement Housing Programme of 1961 (GKRP) was prepared by the famed Doxiadis Associates from Greece, and framed Karachi's problems – including growing inequalities in housing and service access – as a "problem of proper planning" (Doxiadis Associates, 1961: 6). The plan thus focused exclusively on resettlement, seeking to accommodate both refugee populations as well as urban populations evicted in the course of inner city redevelopment. For instance, Doxiadis planners estimated that there were roughly 119,000 inner city residents requiring housing and access to public services, and that Karachi would require 500,000 new housing units in the next twenty years. The GKRP proposed constructing self-contained "townships"

– complete with schools, commercial areas, employment opportunities, and public service amenities – on the eastern and northern outskirts of Karachi. Korangi Town to the east, for instance, was to house a population of 400,000. These townships, in turn, were to be funded by a combination of government subsidies and installments paid by residents which would later be used to develop public services. But, with only 10,000 of a proposed 45,000 houses constructed, the GKRP, like its predecessor, was not fully implemented (Hasan, 2000; Soomro and Soomro, 2018). Moreover, state institutions like the KMC were slow to provide supporting infrastructures such as roads, waterworks, and sanitation facilities that were essential in making peripheral townships livable, well-connected areas (Hasan and Sadiq, 2004). Eventually, Doxiadis Associates' new focus on planning Islamabad as the federal capital was the final nail in the GKRP's coffin.

The GKP and the GKRP were both emblematic visions of an urban planning paradigm in the 20th century which sought to construct the liberal city through top-down "master planning" (see Joyce, 2006). As Aprodicio Laquian (2005: 66) writes, this planning approach, which was common in most Asian cities in the 20th century, assumed that: "[population] growth, people's movements, their productive behavior, and their search for leisure and cultural activities determined the shape and geographic extent of the city." Planners thus focused on shaping the city's built form by organizing its streets, providing potable water and networks of sanitation, separating housing areas from industrial and work districts, and creating aesthetically pleasing spaces such as parks (Ibid).[38] Both the GKP and GKRP thus envisioned a substantial role for the state in transferring inner-city populations living in "*katcha*" settlements to well-planned residential areas at the city's outskirts. These resettlement housing schemes were

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[38] In general, master planning, common in American and European cities throughout the 20th century, was "shaped by a concern with aesthetics (order, harmony, formality and symmetry); efficiency (functional specialisation of areas and movement, and the free flow of traffic); and modernisation (slum removal, vertical or tower buildings, connectivity, plentiful open green space)" (Watson, 2009a: 2261).

described as all-inclusive urban units complete with state-provided infrastructures for transport, public services, and housing. For instance, MRV planners emphasized the need to develop the "Neighborhood Unit" as "the most important and harmonious unit in the body of the city" that would include all the necessities of everyday life including public services and civic amenities (MRV, 1967: 54). Such a unit, moreover, was to replace what planners saw as "irregularly shaped [parts] of the city with multi-story buildings and narrow winding streets with alleys, partly used for bazaars" (Ibid, 17). In addition, the GKRP described Korangi as a township where residents "integrated into properly organized communities with all necessary schools, mosques, parks, playgrounds, markets, health centers and public utilities" (Doxiadis Associates, 1961: 2).

Both the GKP and GKRP thus envisioned the rationalization and standardization of urban space as part of Karachi's physical development. In seeking to extend infrastructures, build public parks, schools, and hospitals, the work of post-partition planning in Karachi was a concerted effort to eradicate spaces that – largely because of their appearance and low-income inhabitants – were considered unplanned spaces. Ultimately, however, while planners were successful in working out the land requirements, the inability (or unwillingness) of state institutions to provide formalized infrastructures for public utilities meant that resettlement was never realized as envisioned.[39]

In turn, civil society activists argue that in their efforts to create well-functioning townships, resettlement policies had the paradoxical effect of growing the unregulated, so-called informal sector. For instance, they claim that because evicted residents were removed from their dwellings and left without livable areas to settle in, many families

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[39] As Daechsel (2011) convincingly argues, the relative early successes of resettling refugee populations in Korangi with the equally swift abandonment by the state in developing much needed infrastructure did not signify a lack of control. Rather, Ayub's military regime was more concerned with demonstrating its territorial power than solidifying social control in townships through the expansion of governmentality and legibility (see Daechsel, 2011).

preferred to relocate themselves to parts of the city where they could access basic necessities like water through lakes and rivers, unauthorized boreholes, tankers, or theft from municipal sources (Hasan and Sadiq, 2004). As a retired city planner and urban activists stated in describing for me the state of Karachi's early resettlement: "Refugees and others were uprooted and sent to large swathes of lands called townships. The KIT made one access road in and out." For many urban activists and state officials, the half-hearted construction of peripheral townships along with the continuing rise in urbanizations rates meant that state policies for resettlement could be linked to an increased Karachi's "*katcha*" areas (Ibid; see also Hasan and Mohib, 2003).

In general, the period from the mid-60s to mid-70s is often described by civil society accounts as one where planning lapsed (Sayeed et al., 2013). Ayub Khan's military dictatorship continued to demolish what it described as unplanned settlements and relocate Karachi's urban to the city's western fringes, now sprawling beyond the Lyari River, without providing resettled populations with housing units or sufficient access to city infrastructure. Moreover, while resettlement continued, the KDA had no complementary policy in place to improve living conditions in already existing city settlements. According to one civil society account, this period was therefore marked by a planning paradigm which "advocated relocating… poor communities to new sites instead of upgrading the area where they lived" (Hasan and Sadiq, 2004: 80).

Regularization and the 1974 Plan

By the time Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's socialist Pakistan People's Party (PPP) came into power in 1973, Karachi was in desperate need of a new master plan. According to KDA estimates, the city's population was at 4.4 million in 1974 and projected to grow to 14.2 million by the year 2000, with little hope for resettlement alone to provide formalized

housing and public service access (Master Planning Group of Offices, 1974: 49). Much of this growth was concentrated towards the city's north and northwest where the growing number of unplanned settlements and underserviced housing schemes had the dual effect of unbalancing overall urban density and increasing urban sprawl. Moreover, Karachi was also facing pressures created from an economic standpoint. First, Pakistan had left behind its status as an Asian Tiger by the early 70s and, instead, embraced a far reduced rate of economic growth (Talbot, 2012). Second, while there was a decrease in refugee arrivals, the changing structure of Pakistan's economy under General Ayub's Green Revolution policies kept rural-urban migration high. According to KDA statistics, for instance, of the 384,000 people that came to Karachi between 1951 and 1958, 170,000 came from rural parts of Pakistan rather than India (KDA, 1974: 47). But KDA planners also accentuated the positives of such continued urban migration, going as far to suggest that reduced urban growth would likely "signal overall economic and social disaster" (Ibid: 7). As the country's largest (and fastest growing) city, Karachi thus bore the dual burden of accommodating a growing urban population and revitalizing Pakistan's economy.

KDA thus prepared the Karachi Development Plan 1974-1985 (KDP) with support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The KDP described Karachi as being in a state of "crisis caused by the lack of services", a situation that was made worse by an explosive rate of rural-urban migration which posed significant challenges for housing and service delivery (Ibid: 3). In response, the KDP proposed an ambitious "Metroville Programme" as a way to shape the city's future form. KDA planners did not want to repeat the process of allotting land for resettlement while failing to provide supporting of infrastructure, so they prompted a new idea for housing altogether that encouraged permanent residence and reduced land speculation. KDA's planners made explicit that what Karachi required was "not another housing scheme, but a well thought

out incremental building programme" (Ibid: 33). "Metrovilles" were thus envisioned as distinct housing modules of more than 50,000 people from a variety of income groups. These modules, moreover, were to have on-site administrative systems, employment in the form of small industries and "high street" local commerce, as well as reliable accesses to water and sanitation services, education, and healthcare (Ibid: 338-339). Finally, while the KDP proposed that Metrovilles serve a variety of income groups with 80, 120, 240, and 400 square-yard plots of land available for housing units, it explicitly targeted communities and families that were "concerned [with] the ownership and building of a permanent urban home" (Ibid: 335).

Despite its attempts to sidestep previous planning mistakes, the KDP shared many similarities with earlier resettlement projects. Chiefly, it proposed developing the city's peripheral areas, in particular the northwestern, eastern, and southeastern quarters, as self-sufficient and self-governable urban units. But, the KDP also emerged in a national political and global developmental context during this period that offered a new approach to urban development. First, global development paradigms during the 1970s were advocating the need to partner with local communities to engender grassroots, participatory development in urban "slums" (see Turner and Fitcher, 1972). Second, Bhutto's socialist platform of "*roti, kapra, aur makan*" [food, clothing, and shelter] did a great deal to legitimate the existence (and hitherto untapped voting power) of residents living in what were still described as "*katcha*" and illegal housing settlements.[40] Planners capitalized on this ideological shift by advocating the need to develop rather than destroy these areas. Thus, in addition to the Metroville Programme, the KDP also proposed an "Improvement and Regularization Programme for Unauthorized Areas" – later called KAIRP – as one of three major housing programs for low-income communities. In a

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[40] According to civil society accounts, illegal areas garnered a degree of legitimacy in popular discourse during Bhutto's first tenure as prime minister (see Ahmed et al., 2016; Hasan et al., 2013).

noteworthy break from previous policies, KDA planners recognized the limitations of resettlement:

> Over 10,000 jhuggi [mud/slum] huts have been removed, but still their number is increasing… Given the large population affected and the generally recognized failure of the previous resettlement programme to hold the jhuggi dwellers at their open plot site… it is apparent that wholesale resettlement is not physically, financially or socially possible (Master Planning Group of Offices, 1974: 183 – 184).

For KDA's planners, the logic was simple. Resettlement policies of the past had not taken into account the needs of low-income communities. As such, the quality of housing units was not the problem, but issues like "security of land tenure, water, drainage, sanitation, employment and education and health services" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 1974; 35). As a "regularization" program, KAIRP sought to address precisely these issues by taking the first and crucial step of awarding already existing *katchi abadis* (specifically, those which were not occupying important public land such as railways) with legal land tenure. Following this, state organs such as the KMC and various provincial departments including education and health would work together with communities to upgrade living conditions.

The 1974 Karachi Development Plan's legacy remains mixed despite its reputation as a pioneering initiative (see Hasan et al., 2013). On the one hand, it failed to account for many of Karachi's political dynamics, despite its astute observation on the historic causes and projected futures of unplanned urbanization. For instance, according to a joint 1991 UNDP and KDA evaluation mission, the KDP failed because of a lack of political will, the absence of a powerful central planning authority, and pressure from "powerful lobbies of vested interest groups" (UNDP, 1991: 12). In short, the KDP failed to eliminate the very sources of land speculation it identified as posing a problem to housing, let alone provide an institutionally feasible roadmap to transform the city. Ironically, early Metroville modules in the northeast periphery became prey for private

land developers interested in constructing high-rise apartment buildings for middle-class residents. KAIRP, too, was considered a failure as it managed to "regularize" a paltry 18,000 housing units out of a possible 233,000 (Hasan and Sadiq, 2004: 85). Nevertheless, KDA planners displayed in the KDP a new perception in which the so-called unplanned city was a positive – if unavoidable – aspect of Karachi:

> [Jhuggi] settlements serve a vital and useful purpose. They usually are associated with a well-developed social structure which provides security in times of uncertainty and individual need. They are frequently located near employment places and they frequently are substantial generators of employment. They provide a means for the low-income family to survive at prices it can afford (Master Planning Group of Offices, 1974: 33).

While the KDP, like earlier plans, continued to describe a domain of social, political, and cultural relationships that existed beyond the regulatory domain of the formal state, it also presented such a domain as crucial for Karachi's future development. As such, despite KAIRP's objective failure in terms of bulk titling, the KDP marked an important turning point in how planners, politicians, and state institutions understood what they perceived to be unplanned parts of the city. It did so by challenging planners' own, previous assumption that such settlements were dirty, backward, and inherently problematic areas that needed to be eliminated in the interests of good urban governance. In doing so, the KDP paved the way to give regularization policies legal cover. In fact, the plan secured an important victory in 1987 when the Government of Sindh passed the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act, creating the Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (SKAA) as a dedicated institution with considerable financial powers to enact regularization. The provincial government subsequently passed the 1993 Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (Regularisation, Improvement, and Development) Regulations which outlines the regularization procedures. In the following sections, I turn attention to how this legal and institutional framework made it possible to discursively produce a

dichotomy between the so-called formal and informal city.[41] I first examine how the 1987 act reframed previously considered illegal and illegitimate urban areas as either "regularized" (legalized) or "non-regularized" (illegal) *katchi abadis*. I then address how the 1993 regulations, in advocating an "external/internal" division in the work of urban redevelopment in regularized *katchi abadis*, discursively reproduced divisions between so-called formal and informal actors. In doing so, the regulations, constructed "regularized" *katchi abadis* as unique areas critical to urban development and governance in Karachi.

Katchi Abadis and the 1987 Act

In 1978, Pakistan entered its longest stint of military rule. Unlike his predecessors who were committed to resettlement, however, General Zia-ul Haq did little to alter KDP's approach. In fact, it was precisely because hitherto ignored settlements had become an important well of political support under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in the 1970s, that General Zia pushed forward a comprehensive legal and administrative framework to encourage their legalization and development (Hasan et al., 2013). In March 1987, the Government of Sindh passed the Sindh Katchi Abadis Act, establishing the SKAA as a separate provincial department whose sole purpose was to provide legal status to all or specific parts of an "unplanned" settlement – a process that was known as "regularization." The act was a milestone, not least because it established the SKAA as a body with broad financial and procedural powers to "acquire, hold and dispose of property" (Government of Sindh, 1987: 18) – a significant breakthrough given the number of land owning

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[41] I shift attention from the politics of the regularization process in Karachi (see Gazdar and Mallah, 2011) to instead examine the political work done by the legal and administrative framework of regularization. I draw here on the work of legal scholars who demonstrate the law is a political resource that can be drawn upon by a variety of state and non-state actors to achieve different ends. For instance, in his important work, *Law's Fragile State*, Mark Massoud (2014) examines the role of law in weak institutional contexts. Focusing on Sudan, Massoud not only describes how colonial and postcolonial rulers have utilized legality to further authoritarian rule, but how legal provisions have also opened space for civil society and humanitarian actors to secure important victories against the indiscriminate use of state power.

agencies in Karachi (figure 2.1) – but also because, unlike KAIRP, it introduced a specific criterion to legalize eligible settlements that were without legal tenure. The most significant power afforded to the SKAA under the 1987 act, therefore, was the authority to determine which settlements could be officially declared "regularized *katchi abadis*." These powers were laid out in Chapter IV of the act titled "Declaration of Katchi Abadis and Acquisition of Land." Under Chapter IV, an untitled settlement could only be "regularized" as a *katchi abadi* if it contained a minimum of 40 households and was established before 23rd March 1985 (later extended to June 30 1997):

> Subject to sub-sections (2), (3) and (4) and directions of Government, if any, the Authority may, after such enquiry as deemed fit, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare any area or part thereof which is partially or wholly occupied unauthorisedly before the 23rd day of March, 1985 and continues to be occupied to be a *Katchi Abadi* (Government of Sindh, 1987: 23, emphasis added).

Of significance here was not only that "unauthorized" settlements could now be legalized under a specific criterion. Rather, it was that the act assigned the specific nomenclature of "regularization" to areas that were eligible to be titled. Indeed, chapter IV went further by describing what could *disqualify* an untitled settlement from being declared a regularized *katchi abadi*. For instance, while the SKAA had the authority to initiate court proceedings if it could not arrange a consensual purchase of state-owned land on which an untitled settlement was located, this rule did not apply to land owned by the federal government, private individuals, or cooperative societies. In these latter cases, SKAA would have to be given express consent by the relevant third party in order to declare the untitled settlement a regularized *katchi abadi*. Chapter IV also disqualified untitled settlement if they existed on land earmarked for "the purposes of road, streets, water supply arrangements, sewerage or other conservancy arrangements, hospitals, schools, colleges, libraries, playgrounds, gardens, mosques, graveyards, railways, high tension lines, or such" (Ibid: 24). Finally, chapter IV did the important work of situating regularized *katchi abadis* within the legal jurisdiction of the SKAA. Once a *katchi abadi* was

declared eligible for regularization, chapter III of the act granted the SKAA authority to develop bulk infrastructure such as trunk water and sewage mains, evict occupants in parts of the settlement deemed ineligible for titling, and grant legal tenure to individual households. Regularized *katchi abadis* were also located within the jurisdiction of specific urban administrative units. Depending on their location, regularized *katchi abadis* would continue to "vest in the Council in which such Katchi Abadis are situated for the purpose of improvement, development or regularization" according to the act (Ibid). The 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act therefore did the important work of creating an extended typology of land use that could retroactively distinguish *between* different kinds of urban space in Karachi according to what planners presumed to be the characteristics of "planned" and "unplanned" space.

For instance, under the Sindh Katchi Abadis Act planned areas, which were often described in the city's master plans as areas developed legally and according to a predefined blueprint, could be distinguished from much of the unplanned space of "*katcha*" areas that planners saw as extralegally emerging through urban migration. In this sense, "*katchi abadis*" as a whole were distinguished from planned settlements based on a perceived history of legal or illegal development.[42] Planned settlements in this sense included both colonial cantonments and upper-class housing societies that were officially developed by the Pakistan Army after 1947, as well as resettlement housing schemes like Korangi that were proposed by earlier master plans and developed by the KDA. By contrast, *katchi abadis* were perceived to have been developed entirely outside formal state

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[42] In his excellent work on the Indian city of New Delhi, Asher Ghertner's (2015) deconstructs the legal/illegal binary as it relates to so-called planned or unplanned urban space. For Ghertner, the legal nature of developments in millennial Delhi matters less than their aesthetic qualities of a "world-class" city. In turn, it is how closely structures resemble a graspable world-class aesthetic that determines whether they are sanctioned by the state and hence whether they have a place in the changing city. Ghertner thus shows that state-sanctioned structures may nevertheless remain extra-formal in that the basis for their development is defined by extralegality and even illegality.

rules and codified procedures.[43] For planners, these areas were understood as "squatter" settlements and included much of the city's space that the KDP had previously described as "*jhuggi* [mud/slum] settlements" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 1974: 183).[44]

But, the Sindh Katchi Abadis Act also gave rise to a second logic of distinction based on whether settlements could *currently* be described as legal. Here, "regularized" *katchi abadis* and planned areas were perceived to have something in common; while planned areas were always considered legally developed under the auspices of state institutions, regularized *katchi abadis* were retroactively legalized under the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act. A more significant distinction, however, lay between regularized *katchi abadis* and what planners continued to describe as "illegal" unplanned areas. While the former were legalized forms of land use under the 1987 act, the latter, because they were "not regularizable" under chapter III of the act (Government of Sindh, 1987: 21) remained illegal. Despite sharing a presumed extralegal history of development, these latter settlements did not meet the eligibility criterion to be legalized and hence could not be regularized. For these settlements, the 1987 act gave the SKAA the power to "evict or cause to be evicted… any area which is not *regularizable as a Katchi Abadi* in accordance with the law" (Ibid, emphasis added).

The Sindh Katchi Abadis act thus introduced regularized *katchi abadis* as a new, official category of land use. In addition to distinguishing such areas from other types of "planned" and "unplanned" urban space, the 1987 act also made regularized *katchi abadis* knowable objects in terms of specific characteristics. Regularized *katchi abadis* were understood as having a specific history of development ("unplanned"), size (larger than

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[43] Gazdar and Mallah (2011) provide an excellent account of how Karachi's *katchi abadis* were in fact developed by middlemen, political patrons, and community based organizations who worked *with* formal institutions and state officials to provide housing, water, sanitation, and other services. For accounts of "middlemen" involved in urban development both in Karachi and beyond see Anwar (2014), Hasan (1989), Hansen and Verkaaik (2009).

[44] Such settlements were generally described as "*kutcha*" [impermanent] in other plans such as the GKP and GKRP.

40 households), age (older than 1985) and legal status under the 1987 act ("regularized"). By standardizing them in terms of nomenclature, physical characteristics, and formalized jurisdiction, the 1987 act rationalized Karachi's burgeoning the ethnically, physically, and socially diverse housing settlements that were emerging in the wake of rural to urban migration.

But, while the 1987 act took a significant step forward in so rationalizing urban space in Karachi, it had remarkably few, if any provisions to increase the role of state institutions in service delivery. For instance, aside from making the SKAA responsible for arranging "civic amenities and civic services in the Katchi Abadis through the Councils or other concerned agencies" (Ibid), the act did not indicate whether these now legalized areas would be subject to the everyday jurisdiction of state institutions like the KMC and the (now defunct) Karachi Water Board. While it discursively produced regularized *katchi abadis* as formal, legal units of urban space, the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act was considerably less clear about how everyday governance tasks such as trash collection, water supply, or sanitation would be carried out.[45] As I demonstrate below, the absence of these provisions allowed rulers to effectively rationalize regularized *katchi abadis* as *simultaneously* legal and unregulated, while clearly demarcating the domains in which legality and extralegality could exist. This was most apparent when it came to procedures determining the "external/internal" development of a regularized settlement.

"External/Internal" and Formal/Informal

The SKAA was afforded a broad array of powers to "implement policies formulated by Government for the development or improvement of the areas of the Katchi Abadis and regularization of such Katchi Abadis" (Government of Sindh, 1987: 21). These included

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[45] It is important to read this gap in the light of scholarship which sees extending infrastructures for water, sanitation, and other services as crucial to the consolidation of formalized rule (Foucualt, 1991; Mann, 1986; Scott, 1998).

devising and implementing programs to upgrade regularized *katchi abadis* with better housing and infrastructure, initiate proceedings to acquire land, and authorize or carry out evictions in settlements that could not be titled because they did not meet the eligibility criterion. Steps to title or "regularize" an unplanned settlement were later laid out under the 1993 Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (Regularisation, Improvement, and Development) Regulations (Government of Sindh, 1994). Under this process, residents of an untitled settlement would first submit documentary proof such as birth certificates, national identity cards, utility bills, ration cards or other official paperwork proving residence before the cutoff date. Once the SKAA verified this documentation and the 40 houses requirement, officials would carry out a detailed mapping survey and population census, the goal of which was to determine the physical state of housing and infrastructure as well as whether all of the settlement or only specific areas may be titled. In the latter sense, this meant determining whether any part of the settlement existed on land earmarked for other kinds of urban development, obstructed crucial transport links, or was built in environmentally hazardous or unsanitary conditions.

After the SKAA deemed the settlement met this additional criterion, the mapped area would be "frozen" so that any future encroachment was excluded from the regularization process (Government of Sindh, 1994: 7). The SKAA at this time would also determine the government agency that legally owned the land in order to arrange an official purchase. With the land transfer complete, the SKAA would "notify" the area, thereby granting it status as a *katchi abadi* that is in the process of being titled – or "regularized." As part of this process, the SKAA, the new legal owner of the land, would make leases available to individual households for plots. Essentially, illegally constructed houses would be given legal tenure as families paid SKAA yearly lease charges to buy the property they occupied. Such individual leasing would not, however, be compulsory, but an optional benefit of regularization. This is because the entire mapped area was eligible

to be declared a regularized *katchi abadi* and hence safe from eviction, regardless of the percentage of individual plot leases issued within the mapped area.

In addition, the 1993 Sindh Katchi Abadi Regulations also described regularized *katchi abadis* as in need of "development" and "improvement." With these areas legalized, the document described the importance of revamping old or providing new infrastructures, paving dirt roads, and providing open spaces such as parks and other recreational areas. For instance, once "notified", *katchi abadis* would be subjected to a comprehensive "amelioration plan" that involved assessing the "existing community facilities available in the katchi abadi" in order to determine what kind of tackles developments were required (Ibid: 9). Under Chapter IV Section B entitled "Development Scheme", this could include but was not limited to:

> a. Housing, re-housing including low cost housing;
> b. Community facilities including water supply with distribution network, underground sewerage including disposal system, treatment plant, electricity supply, gas and other public utilities, where required;
> c. Improvements of existing roads & streets and opening of new streets;
> d. The closing, alteration or demolition and improvement of dwelling units or portion(s) thereof unfit for human habitation;
> e. Parks, playgrounds or other open spaces;
> f. Reclamation of land for markets and gardens or any other matter related with the development scheme (Government of Sindh, 1994: 8).

Like many official documents, ordinances, and plans in Karachi's past, the 1993 Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority Regulations ordinance singled out infrastructural development (water, sanitation, roads) and housing as significant areas of improvement in Karachi. The regulations even placed an emphasis on "parks, playgrounds or other open spaces" (Government of Sindh, 1994: 8), harkening back to the GKP and GKRP's preoccupation with aesthetic form. Yet, an important distinction lay in the framing of *how* and *by whom* different aspects of urban development should be carried out. For instance, while the SKAA was expected to play a considerable role in identifying eligible untitled settlements, purchasing land, and issuing leases, the regulations ordinance also signaled

the need for community actors from within a *katchi abadi* to participate in their development and improvement. For instance, under chapter IV of the ordinance, any amelioration plan determining the developments needs of a notified settlement would require determining the "capacity of… [the] community... of the area [to participate] in the development process starting with planning, implementation and maintenance of services" (Ibid, 9).

Indeed, a crucial step of the development process lay in establishing "a committee consisting of officers of the Authority, community leaders and representatives of Non-Government organisations, if any, to assist the Authority in preparation of the development scheme" (Ibid). Such provisions carved out a significant space for community actors such as collectively appointed representatives, grassroots organizations, and local authority holders (such as village *chaudhrys* "heads") in the urban development process. The 1993 regulations ordinance thus created a clear dichotomization between the roles and responsibilities of "formal" actors, such as state institutions and NGOs on one hand, and "informal" actors – in the sense of being unregulated by codified laws and procedures – from the community on the other. Nowhere was this dichotomization more explicit than in the "internal/external" model of development described by the ordinance where, to enact the amelioration plan, the relevant state institutions would extend bulk infrastructure such as trunk roads and water mains to the settlement while communities would pave roads, lay individual pipes, and upgrade houses within a "notified" *katchi abadi*:

> a. The total cost of the scheme including cost of land, cost of development (both internal and external) and the cost which shall be recovered from the occupants of the katchi abadi in any shape including lease charges;
> b. Wherever necessary the external water supply and sewerage disposal shall be financed by the Authority [SKAA]. *On receipt of a request from the community, the Authority shall assist them in designing and supervising the work of internal development.* The expenditure for internal development shall be borne by the community concerned; (Government of Sindh, 1994: 9. Emphasis added).

Though not explicitly laid out in the language of formality and informality, the "external/internal" model of development nevertheless mirrored a distinction between two distinct processes of urban development; the first reflected the "external", rationalized locus of state institutions providing bulk infrastructures, while the second described an unregulated, social and cultural domain through which "internal" development could be carried out. Of course, this did not imply that formal, non-state actors were not part of the internal development process. For instance, the regulations ordinance made a clear place for "NGOs of the area, if any" (Government of Sindh, 1994: 9) to be included as well. Nevertheless, of critical importance was the community participation and concern. Indeed, the idea that "informality" – what might aptly be described here as "the vital role played by big men (*dadas*), friends, families and followers" Anand, 2017: 67) – should play a critical role in urban development was further reinforced by the SKAA's own description of the regularization process:

> Since the improvement and development work cannot be successfully carried out without the participation of the residents of *katchi abadis*, the SKAA's work has also included the mobilization of their human and material resources so that the development decisions are taken according to the resident's needs and wishes.[46]

The 1993 Sindh Katchi Abadi Regulations ordinance embodied the prevailing logic emerging amongst development practitioners in the 1970s that effective urban development need not require expanding the state's formalized role in service delivery.[47] Unlike the resettlement policies of the past, the legal and institutional framework of regularization did not seek to eradicate the sort of unregulated or "informal" practices that planners assumed were characteristic of *katchi abadis*. Rather, it did the opposite by encouraging communities to address their concerns associated with water, sanitation, and housing with the everyday social and cultural structures available to them – albeit, with the SKAA's approval and external support. The 1993 regulations ordinance thus adapted

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[46] https://skaa.sindh.gov.pk/
[47] See Turner and Fichter (1972).

the logic already laid out in the 1974 Karachi Development Plan that emphasized the need to utilize pre-existing social structures and community relations that planners assumed existed in "*jhuggi* [mud/slum] settlements" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 1974: 33).

In addition to producing them as legalized forms of land use, planners thus also constructed regularized *katchi abadis* as areas that simultaneously existed outside everyday municipal regulations. This was done by describing a distinct process of urban renewal which demarcated the roles and responsibilities of state institutions on the one hand and community actors on the other. The latter, which were seen as integral to "internal" development, essentially implied a role for community-based social structures and relationships. Regularized *katchi abadis* were thus discursively constructed as legalized areas, part of the formal city, that were nevertheless considered spaces of acceptable improvisation and grassroots entrepreneurialism – and crucially so when it came to urban development – in terms of everyday operation. As a particular kind of land use, then, regularized *katchi abadis* were actively rationalized, based on planners' own understandings of these terms, as simultaneously formal/legal and *informal.* The framework of regularization as embodied in the 1987 Katchi Abadis Act and the 1993 Katchi Abadis Regulations thus produced urban space as a legible object. Below, I turn to how this discursive construction of physical space has enabled representations of Karachi in which disorderly and unregulated urban spaces are presented as constitutive of an ordered, structured, and governed city.

The Ordered City

In 2007, the City District Government of Karachi (CDGK) published the Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020 (KDSP). The KDSP outlined a development strategy

for the city until the year 2020 and was unveiled in a moment of political resurgence for Karachi. General Pervez Musharraf had dismissed the democratically elected government in a 1999 coup d'état, thus plunging Pakistan into military rule once again. Like his predecessors, however, General Musharraf saw Karachi as a well of political support and was quick to ally with the city's ruling Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). The product of this alliance was the 2001 Sindh Local Government Ordinance which granted Karachi significant political autonomy. Whereas the city had previously fallen under the jurisdiction of the Government of Sindh, with members of the provincial government overseeing administrative bodies like the KWSB and KMC, the government of Karachi, under the office the mayor, now had considerable regulatory and financial powers. The newly-formed CDGK – controlled and managed by the MQM – thus used the KSDP to highlight a new vision of Karachi as a "world-class city and attractive economic center with a decent life for Karachiites" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007: iii). Specifically, the newly formed Master Planning Group of Offices asked "leaders, institutions and [the] citizens of Karachi to change the way the city works and does business" (Ibid, 3). As part of this, planners and the MQM conducted city-wide socio-economic and land use surveys to better understand the "multifaceted dimension of the prevailing urban crisis" (Ibid: 4).

Yet, despite Karachi's newfound autonomy, little had changed in terms of how physical spaces were to be managed. Other than a somewhat general suggestion that world-class cities were "characterized by minimal poverty and slums" (Ibid: 3), the KDSP followed the older logic of legalizing eligible untitled settlements. In other words, CDGK planners continued to advocate classifying much of Karachi's physical space as either "planned" areas, "regularized" *katchi abadis* or "non-regularized" and hence illegal areas. This hinged on endorsing the "internal/external" model of development under the SKAA's already-existing framework, and the KDSP went as far as to state that "[for]

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regularization and upgradation of *katchi abadis*, [the KDSP] favors the Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (SKAA) model wherein the land title is tied to payment for land and development cost" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007: 65). In a crucial paragraph, the CDGK stated that:

> In addition to provision of new plots to residents of the informal settlements, improvement of *katchi abadis* by way of infrastructure development is an integral part of the CDGK's housing strategy. Ensuring tenure security through regularization and grant of land leases to inhabitants of *katchi abadis* fulfils a basic condition for the individuals to invest in their housing and improve living conditions (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007: 10).

As the KDSP shows, one of the most intriguing aspects of regularization policies in Karachi is that they have weathered the incommensurable ideological assumptions held by rulers in vastly different national political context. While regularization was first introduced under the PPP's socialist banner in the 1970s, it has since been reinforced by a new urban (re)development narrative in the post Washington Consensus era. As Erik Swyngedouw (2004: 40) writes, neoliberal discourses that place emphasis on the "global" have, since the 1990s, culminated in the "'hollowing out' of the nation state", creating "glocal" urban economies where local scales are a manifestation of hegemonic international discourses advocating the role of the private sector. But, while this politics of scale is apparent in the CDGK's desire to remake Karachi as an "attractive economic center" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007: 3) for international investment, glocalization has done little to alter the rationality of regularization that first envisioned Karachi settlements emerging in the wake of urban migration as deserving of state support. Rather, by stating that "[in] the informal sector, the private sector… will be crucial to the success of improvement and upgradation programs for *katchi abadis*" (Ibid: 66), neoliberal discourses have strengthened the SKAA's already existing logic for regularization by describing informality as a form of bottom-up entrepreneurialism. This retrenchment of "regularization" as crucial to Karachi urban development, in turn,

demonstrates how the city's ever-increasing physical territory has gradually been rendered legible "from above and outside"(Scott, 1998: 43).

The three sets of maps below illustrate this by charting how Karachi space has progressively been represented. The first set of maps, figure 2.3 and 2.4, are derived from the 1974 KDP and depict, respectively, Karachi's land use in the year 1974 and projected land use by the year 1987. In the first map, land is demarcated for residential areas, agriculture, various industries, and defense purposes. In the second, the map projects a significant rise in "unplanned residential" areas both within the city and toward its northwestern peripheries in the next decade. Collectively, and in accordance with the 1974 plan's predictions regarding Karachi's future growth, the KDP maps paint the picture of an anticipated rise in "unplanned" urban space. The second set of maps, figure 2.5 and 2.6 are taken from a January 1987 "SPOT" (Satellite for observation of Earth) image of Karachi carried out as part of a World Bank study (Bertaud, 1989). Collectively, the maps pinpoint the location of "*katchi abadis*" – defined as "Squatter settlements, along waterways, adjacent to railways and other hazardous areas" (Ibid: 57) – in 1987 and project their future expansion by the year 2000. Like the KDP set, these maps do the important work of conceptually separating *planned* space from unplanned space – now called *katchi abadis* – as well as charting the current and anticipated locations of the latter in Karachi by the year 2000. The final map (figure 2.7), which was produced as part of the KDSP, goes a step further in that it makes a further distinction between different kinds of *unplanned* space; specifically, it separates "regularized *katchi abadis*" as a legal category of land use under the 1987 act, from "non-regularized *katchi abadis*" as unplanned, and (as yet) illegal swathes of land. Figure 2.8 thus charts the geographic location of not only planned space, but also legal and as yet illegal urban areas in Karachi.
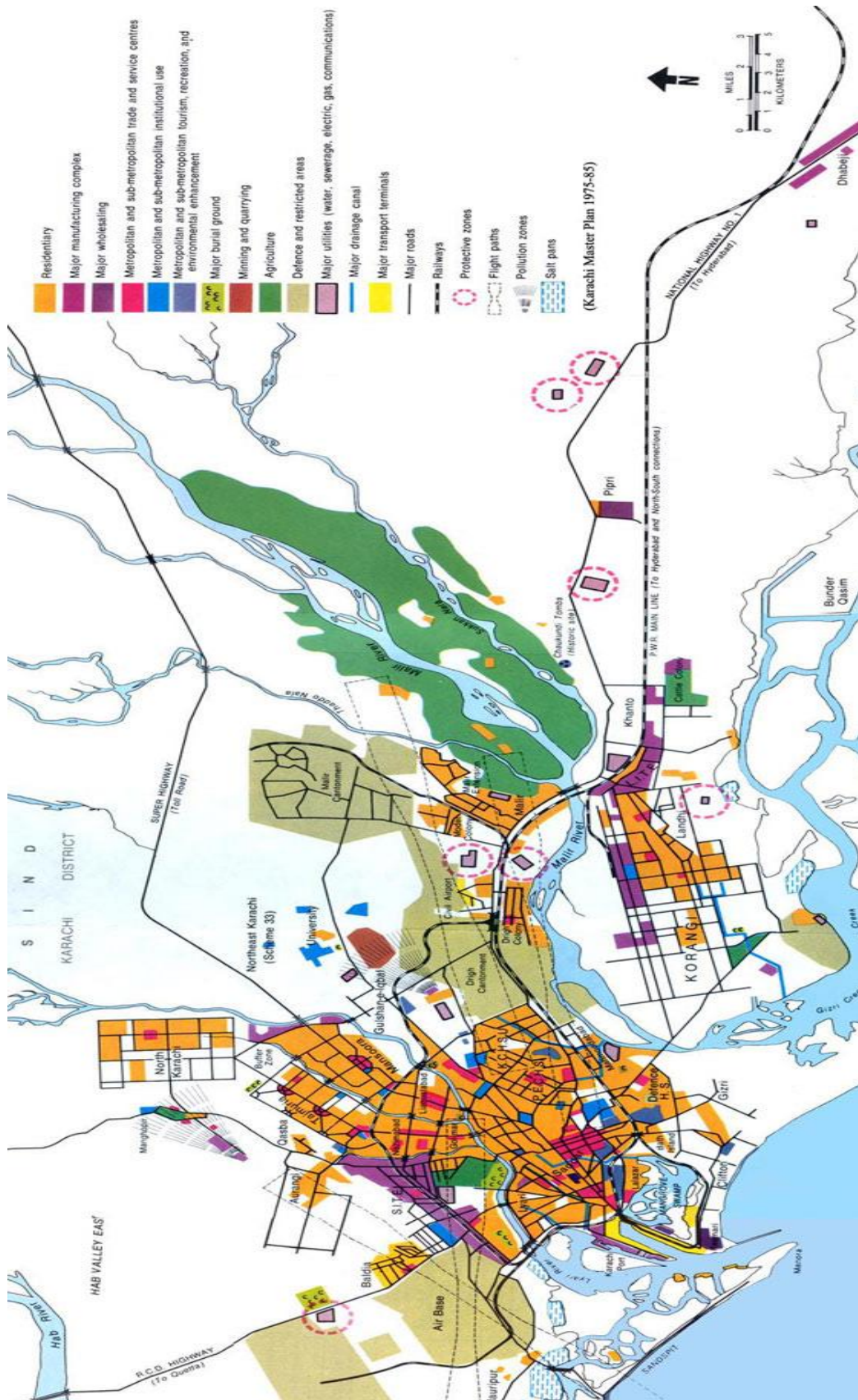
Figure 2.3: Karachi land-use 1974 (Master Planning Group of Offices, 1974)
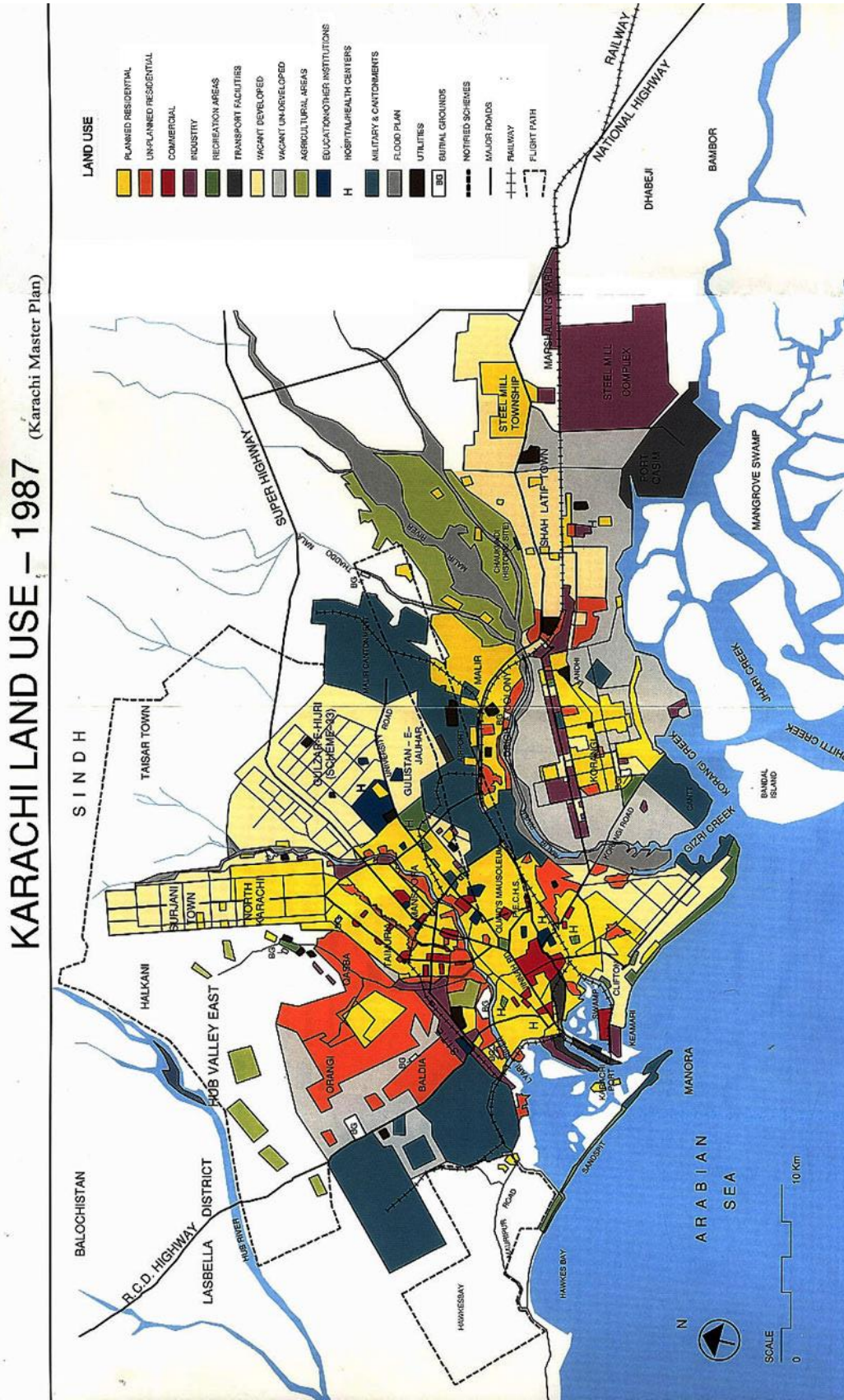
Figure 2.4: Karachi projected land use 1987 (Master Planning Group of Offices, 1974)
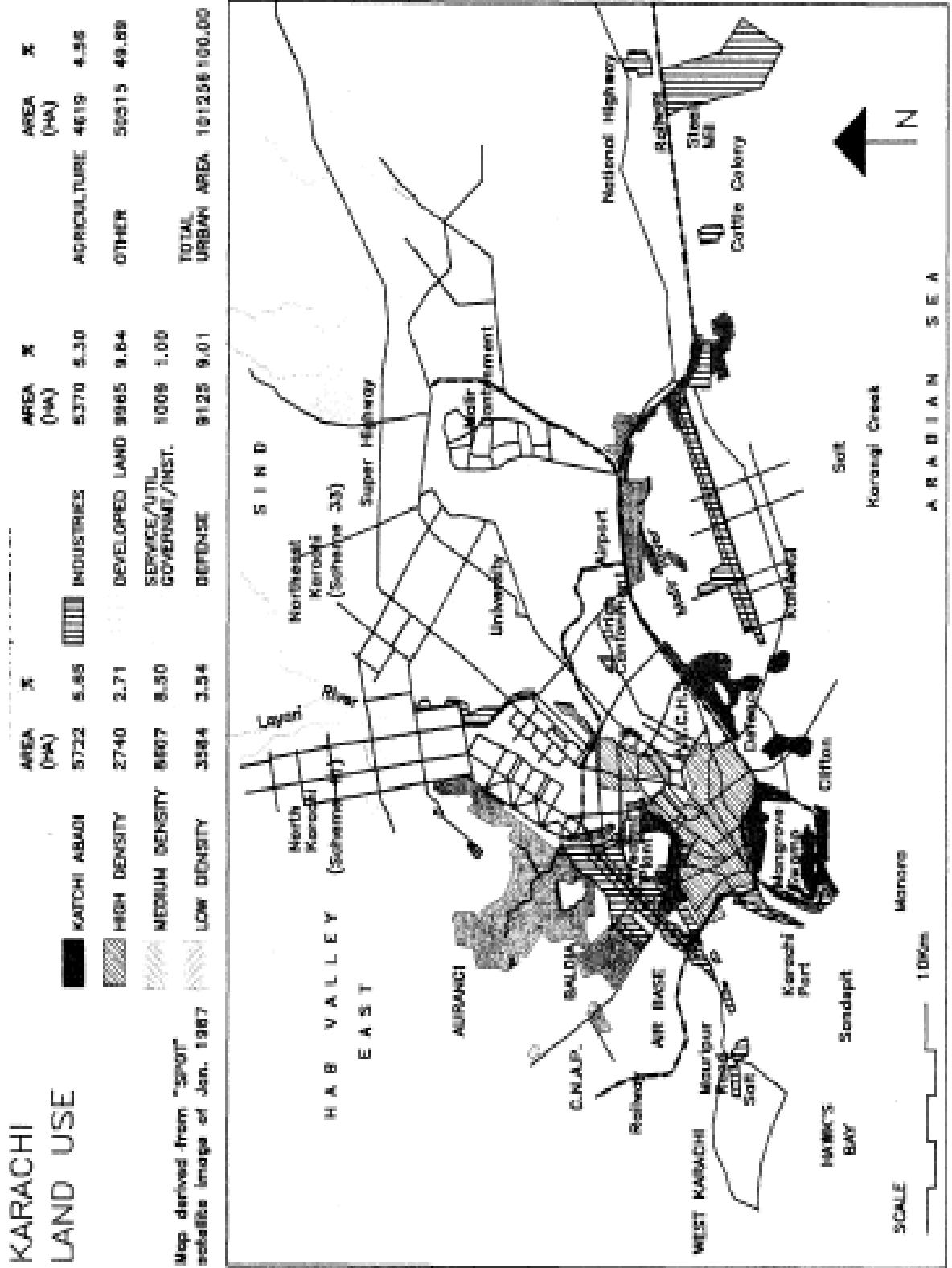
Figure 2.5: Location of *katchi abadis* 1988 (Bertaud, 1989)

KARACHI — KATCHI ABADIES LOCATIONS YEAR 1988 AND PROJECTED EXPANSION YEAR 2000

Map derived from a "SPOT" satellite image of Jan. 1987

		AREA (HA)	AVERAGE DENSITY PERSONS/HA	AREA Ha
A1	Katchi Abadi Next to Waterway & Railway	2331	655	
A2	Katchi Abadi Illegal Subdivision	3077	486	
	Katchi Abadi Expansion Year 2000			2500

N

HAB VALLEY EAST

SIND

Layari River

North Karachi (Scheme 11)

Northeast Karachi (Scheme 33)

Super Highway

Malir Cantonment

National Highway

Steel Mill

Railway

Cattle Colony

AURANGI

University

Malir River

BALDIA

Drigh Cantonment

Airport

KORANGI

Salt

Korangl Creek

C.N.A.P.

AIR BASE

Maurlpur Road

Salt

Treatment Plant

P.E.C.H.S.

Defence

Clifton

Karachi Port

Mangrove Swamp

Sandspit

Manora

HAWK'S BAY

WEST KARACHI

Salt

ARABIAN SEA

SCALE

10Km

Figure 2.6: Projected location of *katchi abadis* 2000 (Bertraud, 1989)
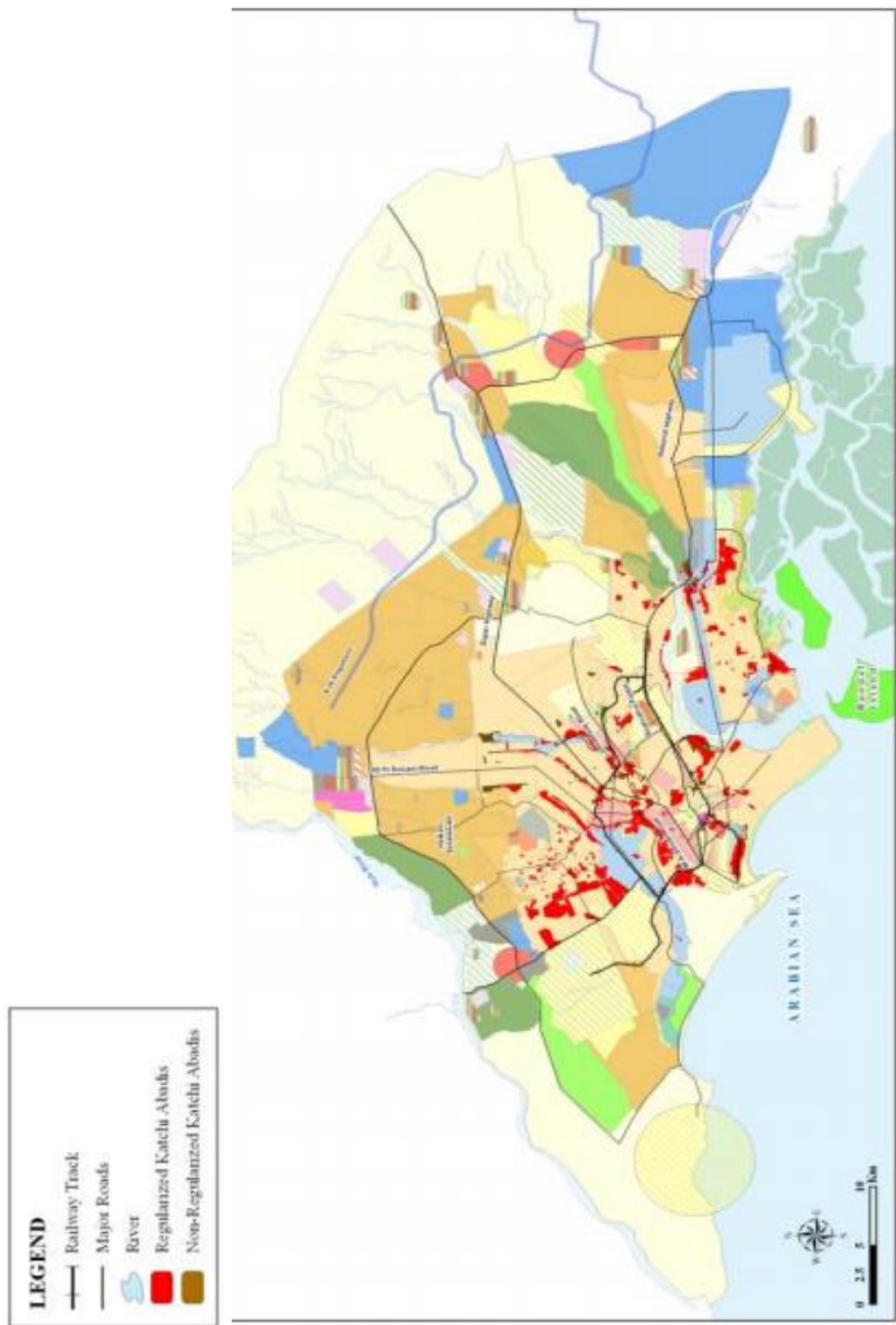
Figure 2. 1: "Regularized *katchi abadis*" and "non-regularized *katchi abadis*" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007)

These maps show how urban space has progressively been represented in Karachi; from being described as simply "planned" and "unplanned", these spaces are represented through the use of an extended typology of land use that not only distinguishes between these spaces but also between titled and untitled spaces in the latter. This city-wide standardization of physical space does not by itself indicate any additional state capacity to enact the urban redevelopment policies called for by the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act. Nevertheless, what is significant is how the discursive construction of "regularized" and "non-regularized" areas as unique forms of land use make it possible to *represent* Karachi as ordered and structured. In a historical context where planners have continuously concerned themselves with addressing the prevalence of "slums", "katcha" areas, and "*jhuggi* [mud] settlements, the ability to rationalize, differentiate, count, and represent growing swathes of urban space according to a readily available set of categorizations produces Karachi itself as a legible object.[48]

Social science scholarship has long sought to identify the foundation of state power and, by extension, the capacity to enact political rule. Building on Max Weber's work, Michael Mann (1986) understanding of the modern state as a "socio-spatial" entity which operates within a physically demarcated domain has been highly influential in this regard. For Mann, the modern state's capacity to rule stems from its "infrastructural power" – understood as the ability to infiltrate, order, and control this physical domain and the social relations therein. In particular, as states deliver services and meet the sociomaterial needs of their citizens their infrastructural power and unique capacity to rule without the explicit use of violence or force increases. For Mann, infrastructural power is a form of authority unique to the modern industrial state. But, even a cursory glance at the decrepit infrastructures, erratically applied laws, and improvised material practices through which

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[48] Scholars of colonial order have shown how representations, and in particular maps, are visual instantiations of state power (Mitchell, 1988, 2002; Said 1979).

a service like water is accessed shows that the sort of rule enabled through the state's presence in everyday society is absent in Karachi – regardless of how planners define and distinguish planned/unplanned or legal/illegal areas. Yet, while Karachi may be an exemplary case of an ungoverned city when seen through the somewhat traditional lens of state capacity, here I draw attention to how political authority articulates and represents its territory as ordered.[49]

In his fantastic work, *Colonizing Egypt*, Mitchell (1988: 44) describes "enframing" as a technique of "dividing up and containing… a neutral surface or volume called 'space.'" Mitchell charts how this technique developed in 19th century Egypt as colonial powers experimented with various sources of order; from constructing a modern military, to engineering model villages under readily available hierarchies of class and status, and, finally, to planning the "Middle-Eastern" city. As Mitchell argues, what was unique about this technique was not that "material" realities were forced – often violently – to conform to idealized representation of the real. For instance, order (or disorder) was not a function of the gap between a plan for a city and its "real" built urban form. Rather, it was that the representation of reality – in such artifacts as plans and models – *itself* became the basis for order; "an appearance of order, an order that works by appearance" (Ibid: 60). If order and disorder were both social constructs of power, than representations of the former became the way in which a presumed, objectively existent reality could be grasped.

These maps, as well as legal documents like the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act, and 1993 Sindh Katchi Abadis Regulations – by articulating and reinforcing a systematized logic of land use – present the existence of a socially constructed order that planners assume exists as an objective reality in Karachi. Yet what is novel in Karachi is how the

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[49] Mann's influential reading on state capacity has since been operationalized to measure state strength (Sofier, 2008; Sofier and Hau, 2008) as well as the capacity for democratization in the postcolonial world (Hau, 2008; Slater, 2008)

social construct of "disorder" – here signified by what planners understand as spaces, practices, and relationships outside and parallel to the regulatory state – is discursively reproduced as part and parcel of social order. Artifacts such as urban plans, land use maps, and legal categorizations are the tools through which this discourse represents physical space *as governed*. But representation of the city as rationalized and legible do not automatically result in interventions such as "slum" demolitions, infrastructure projects, or other kinds of state-sponsored projects that aim to make built urban space *physically* conform to notions of planned social order. Instead, as artifacts, they create what Timothy Mitchell (1988: 60) calls "an order that works by appearance."

Conclusion: Disjuncture

Early planning approaches in the postcolonial period that focused on shaping Karachi's spatial form saw much of the city's physical space as antithetical to an ordered, well-governed, and modernizing metropolis. By the early 1970s, however, global development discourses had encouraged Karachi's planners to entertain a shift in thinking; following slum improvement policies gaining ground in development circles, planners began to describe katchi abadis and "unplanned" settlements as characteristic of Karachi's urban fabric, and thus argued that they were critical to the current and future form and function of the city itself. In turn, the "regularized katchi abadi" was constructed as a unique kind of land use that was simultaneously formal and informal; legal yet unplanned; rationalized but inherently (and acceptably) disorderly from the perspective of the regulatory state; and, moreover, significant for future urban development. As I have argued in this chapter, this discursive construction of regularized katchi abadis enables a novel rationality of rule in Karachi. Specifically, I have shown how "regularization" initiatives from the 1970s onwards, which sought to legalize untitled urban land, allowed planners to discursively produce and represent Karachi's increasingly dynamic urban space – space

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that planners continue to think of as disorderly – as crucial to good governance. Indeed, as regularization received legal and institutional cover under the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act, illegible populations and territories were made knowable according to an extended typology of land use which distinguished "regularized" and "non-regularized" katchi abadis based on their legal status. While the city government official quoted at the start of this chapter described how Karachi's institutionally and politically fractured environment makes top-down planning impossible, this chapter has shown how political authority discursively claims the existence of order, not just despite an objective failure by rulers to consolidate spatial control over the city, but through it.

In doing so, this chapter has demonstrated that the state is capable of discursively reproducing itself in ways that challenge a teleological story of modernization. Here, state authority stems from rules, laws, and procedures which allow rulers to shape physical territory and social conduct. Crucially, the power to distinguish the formal from the "informal", the "modern" from the backward, and the legal from the "illegal" in this sense is the power to declare what exists outside such authority – and by extension the modernization process.[50] In Karachi, however, the state has taken a shape that exists *between* coterminous dichotomizations of formal/informal, legal/illegal, and developed/undeveloped. As planners have constructed the regularized *katchi abadi* as a standalone category of land use with its own, unique set of features, they have *de-dichotomized* these distinctions and combined concepts like "informal" and "legal" to create new categories that are part of the legible and rationalized domain of political authority.

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[50] This has long been understood as the increasingly planned and formalized nature of society; what Michel Foucault (1991) and Max Weber (2013) respectively call "governmentality" and the establishment of "rational-legal authority."

But the retroactive classification of urban space according to these new categories of legibility has not resulted in dispersing, through formalized service delivery, everyday technologies of governance in physical space – or what Michel Foucault (1991) considered a crucial aspect of power being "governmentalized."[51] As planners represent the city in terms of a reified distinction between the formal and informal city, the everyday lived experiences of Karachi's urban poor continuously transcend such fabricated characterizations. Indeed, as I demonstrate in the following chapter, there is significant overlap between aspects of what planners in artifacts like the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act describe as the formal and informal city. These overlaps lay bare the experience of Karachi's residents who simultaneously live between and with what planners describe as the formal provisions of laws and regulations – of having to pay bills, curate official documents, and deal with faceless bureaucracies – and what they continue to perceive as an unregulated terrain of extralegal relationships with everyday service entrepreneurs, authority figures, and political patrons. To highlight this, the following three chapters turn ethnographic attention to how Karachi's urban poor secure a good that is crucial for survival: water. Focusing on the range of actors, practices, and subjectivities through which this precious resource is accessed, these chapters display the disjuncture between the representation of Karachi as governed, and the realities through which everyday life is actually regulated.

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[51] In general, Foucault's (1991) use of this term describes how sociomaterial technologies of governance are dispersed throughout society to indirectly shape individual conduct. For Foucault, the everyday control of individual actions, habits, and subjectivities not only requires power to disperse coercive measures (such as the police, societal norms, and prisons) throughout society, but also what Certomà (2015: 29) calls "consensual forms of government." Formalized service delivery may be grouped into the latter category as a technology of governance that controls the minutest details of everyday life (such as how to dispose of human waste). For further elaborations of such micro-politics, see (Dean, 1999; Pløger, 2008)

CHAPTER 3

"A COMMUNITY FORSAKEN BY GOD"

Access and Order in a Karachi Settlement

In early June 2017, a Karachi settlement faced a potable water shortage. Samandar Colony's water supply had often been interrupted by breakdowns upstream. On this occasion, however, the shortage was caused by an alleged water theft. Someone, it seemed, had tampered with the valves at Samandar Colony's only pumping station. The valves worked by using sealing plates which were manipulated daily to pressurize pipes in specific parts of the settlement at distinct days and times. But the thief had transfigured this delicate system by removing a sealing plate from one of the valves, leaving the corresponding pipe unobstructed regardless of the position of the other two valves. In effect, the thief had tried to ensure that a certain segment of Samandar Colony secretly received more water by stealing from the water "time" given to other parts of the settlement. Residents already aggravated by the scorching heat and lack of electricity were apoplectic when they discovered the sabotage. That this occurred in the holy month of Ramadan when Muslims were expected to be considerate towards others made the trickery unforgivable. With temperatures reaching 100 degrees Fahrenheit, brawls soon began to break out at the pumping station, signaling the possibility of widespread rioting over the lack of water. In the days following the theft, councilors, local Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) officials, political party workers and ordinary residents hastily organized a Jirga (local meeting) to address the conflict. After much deliberation,

the Jirga decided to institute a system of community-enforced watching at the pumping station. Under this system, an ordinary resident of Samandar Colony would work with KWSB officials posted at the station to make sure water was supplied equally to all parts of the settlement. Tensions gradually subsided as residents were assured what little bulk water the settlement did receive would be distributed fairly.

But, while the Jirga's timely intervention had averted violence, the newly instituted watching system did little to address Samandar Colony's bulk water shortages. The settlement's pipes remained intermittently pressurized, with many households continuing to secure water through local vendors, tankers, and political parties, just as they had done for years before the pumping station dispute. Despite the threatening flare of water riots and water-related violence, little, if anything, had changed in terms of how Samandar Colony's residents accessed this precious resource.

In June 2017, there was uncertainty and apprehension over Karachi's escalating "water crisis." While Pakistan's largest and most diverse city had often suffered from periodic bouts of ethnic and sectarian violence, a reported city-wide water shortfall of 650 million gallon/day was fueling fears of widespread future civil unrest. Members of the Sindh Provincial Assembly, climate activists, and international and national media outlets were warning of "water riots" in the wake of a study published by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources that claimed the country would run out water by 2025.[52] Indeed, as Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhter stated in 2017, the water crisis was likely to lead to "civil war-like conditions" (Mansoor, 2017).

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[52] For instance, *edie*, an organization focusing on sustainability, claimed in August 2017 that "Karachi is bracing for what it calls 'water riots', as the 20 million people living in the city grow restless over the limited water supply" (edie newsroom, 2017). Such narratives are often accompanied by scholarly studies that point to a link between resource scarcity and violent conflict in contexts that are characterized by social cleavages and weak state institutions. In Karachi, however, it is not only the reported limited supply of water that creates anxiety over future violence it is also inefficiency and uncertainty when it comes to equally distributing what water the city does have.

Such water-related violence appeared likely in the settlement I call Samandar Colony, where I began exploratory fieldwork in June 2017.[53] Located at Karachi's southwestern edge, this diverse area, which had been developed by a number of actors through a variety of ways over the past forty years, was characterized by highly uncertain access to clean potable water. While the settlement received a small weekly quota of bulk water supplied by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB), individual households suffered from intermittently pressurized pipes, shifting pumping schedules, as well as regular infrastructural breakdowns. Meanwhile, in the wake of the June 2017 theft, families and local councilors in Samandar Colony spoke of the possibility of disputes/fights (*jhagrey*) and altercations (*mun mari*) between different ethnic groups. These conversations often pitted the settlement's Hindu and ethnic Kutchi residents against migrant Pashtun families as the former two accused the latter of stealing their water. At first glance, then, Samandar Colony exhibited many of the characteristics – social cleavages, weak state institutions, and resource scarcity – that Beall et al. (2013: 3096) have identified as sources of "civic conflict" – a distinctly urban phenomenon defined by the "violent expression of grievances" due to state neglect in providing basic services. But, aside from the brief flare up at the pumping station in June 2017, Samandar Colony was yet to experience notable instances of overt, violent conflict over access to water.[54] Indeed, the settlement remained relatively placid between 2016 and 2018, the period during which I conducted my fieldwork in Karachi.

As the excitement from the June 2017 theft died down, I found that the dispute at the pumping station had done little to worsen the persistent uncertainty of potable water

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[53] I follow Levy (2008: 232) here to describe Samandar Colony as a "most-likely case" where "all dimensions except the dimension of theoretical interest, is predicted to reach a certain outcome and yet does not."

[54] The lack of such civic conflict over water in Samandar Colony is puzzling given urban scholarship that points to a link between poor formal service provision and urban conflict (Barraqué, 2012; Beall et al., 2013; von Schnitzler, 2008) and the vast literature on "environmental conflict" that links resource scarcity to political destabilization in weak institutional contexts (see Kahl, 2008; Homer-Dixon, 2010).

supplies; municipal connections remained, at best, intermittently pressurized just as they had before the alleged theft. Indeed, rather than relying on municipal supplies, Samandar Colony's residents, like those in many of Karachi's settlements, met their water needs through a system of privately sourced tankers and small-scale vendors.[55] For example, households in a part of the settlement known as Hindu Para purchased water daily from donkey carts carrying distinctively blue jerry cans of water, or "gallons" as residents called them, even though many had municipal water connections. The prevalence of these small-scale vendors implied that the lack of water-related violence could be explained by alternative forms of access emerging to plug gaps in the city's municipal supply system. But closer attention to the discourses surrounding Samandar Colony's water vendors complicated this assumption. Residents routinely described vendor water as expensive, contaminated with fecal matter, and unfit for human consumption. Yet, they also continued purchasing vendor water, claiming it was a necessity in the face of uncertain everyday access. These discourses highlighted an altogether different puzzle; why did residents continue purchasing dirty and expensive vendor water as a necessity rather than mobilize, protest, or riot in response to the absence of municipal supplies?

In this chapter, I shed light on Samandar Colony's puzzling "hydraulic order" by exploring the meaning-laden, lived experience of everyday water access in the settlement.[56] Drawing on seven months of field research in Hindu Para, a community

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[55] According to a 2019 World Resources Institute Report, 60% of Karachi's residents rely on purchasing water despite a large portion of the city having access to pipe connections (see Mitlin et al., 2019).

[56] I define hydraulic order along two dimensions. First, I follow a long tradition in political science which equates social "order" and "disorder" with the respective absence and presence of civil strife in the form of riots, protests, beatings, the destruction of property, and other overt forms of violent conflict (see, for example, North et al., 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006).[56] Second, I address order (or disorder) particularly as it relates to the relationship between water access and social stability. Scholars argue that there is a potential link between water scarcity on one hand, and violent conflict, political disorder, or social instability on the other (Gleick, 2014; Wolf, 2002). I therefore use the term *hydraulic order* in this chapter to describe a lack of disorder – violence, rioting, protest, or what Zerah et al. (2012: 223) call the "flaring-up of localized conflicts" due to uncertain, unequal, or insufficient access to urban water.

within Samandar Colony, I show that rather than protesting, rioting, or mobilizing for better municipal services, residents purchasing vendor water as the only response to a situation where both formal forms of access – such as government-sponsored water tankers and municipal potable water – and un-institutionalized, more relational means of procurement – such as relying on the patronage of a well-connected political fixer or elected representative – fail to eliminate the daily uncertainty in securing this precious resource. As one resident explained when I asked about the state of water access in the settlement: "Nobody helps us here, this is a community forsaken by god."

Such descriptions of abjection suggest a familiar understanding of marginalized populations as politically paralyzed. For instance, in his seminal work *Power and Powerlessness*, John Gaventa (1980) argues that quiescence to authority is created, not by the "fear of power", but a "sense of powerless [that] may manifest itself as extensive fatalism, self-deprecation, or undue apathy about one's situation" (Gaventa, 1980: 16-17). For Gaventa, the lack of collective action in response to structural inequality spells the end of politics. Indeed, the absence of such resistance is understood as evidence of the hopeless wretchedness of the urban poor as well.[57]

But, as studies of resistance show, collective action is rare and episodic. Politics, in turn, is often found not in the organized efforts of social groups but in banal, everyday social interactions. In *Weapons of the Weak*, for instance, James Scott (2000 [1985]: 137) demonstrates that "rumour, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, anonymity" in daily language and practice amount to everyday forms of resistance. Such resistance stems from an ideological politics that continues to criticize and rebuke power relations particularly in contexts where collective action is unlikely or impossible. The residents I spoke to chastised and caricatured their leaders for

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[57] See, for instance, Auyero and Swistun's (2009) account of "environmental suffering" in Argentina in this vein.

a lack of potable water in Hindu Para. Not only did they vilify an absent and apathetic state ("hakumat"), they often related (unverified) stories of water theft carried out by unprincipled neighbors; spread rumors about "illegal connections" made to surrounding areas under the protection of powerful councilors; gossiped about households who had large water tanks built in their homes; and used unflattering stereotypes to describe rival ethnic groups.[58] But, while such narratives possibly amounted to a kind of ideological resistance to the poor state of water access in the settlement, they tended to exist alongside narratives of necessity; of "making do" and "helping oneself" when it came to describing the lived experience of purchasing vendor water daily.

This chapter moves beyond accounts that describe the lives of the urban poor as either lacking politics on one hand or replete with instances of everyday resistance on the other. Faced with persistent uncertainty in accessing water through both institutionalized and relational networks, I show that Hindu Para's residents respond to their situation with neither quiescence nor everyday resistance. Instead, they actively seek to manage the generalized precarity of their daily lives. In demonstrating this claim I offer a reading of urbanism that is not characterized by dystopia and helplessness. In addition, I seek to separate what may be instances of everyday resistance in Karachi from a significant coping mechanism – a conscious act of survival – adopted by the residents of Hindu Para.[59] Rather than passive recipients overcome by a sense of fatalism or plucky political

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[58] Karachi has long been a home for the Pasthun diaspora. With their population in the city growing, Karachi's Pashtun population has become a target for xenophobic narratives extoling the dangers of unplanned urbanization. Indeed, Pashtuns have not only been scapegoated for Karachi's history of ethnic tension, they are also described as a powerful political force involved with various illegal activities like water theft and land encroachment (see Gayer 2007, 2014). With Samandar Colony becoming a home for ethnic Pasthuns displaced by wars in Afghanistan and Northern Pakistan since the mid-1990s, such narratives have emerged in Hindu Para as well with residents suggesting Pashtuns in the area are part of a "mafia" involved in selling water.

[59] In his important work on the politics of the urban poor, Asef Bayat (1997: 54) describes how people migrating to cities in Iran prior to the Islamic Revolution resorted to various kinds of "subsistence activities" such as hawking and silent land-construction to make space for themselves in the city. For Bayat, these everyday survival strategies are common in most developing contexts. Bayat is clear, however, to differentiate everyday resistance/politics from

actors engaged in daily subversion, I thus show how Karachi's urban poor recognize and work through their precarity.

This chapter begins by situating water vending as a practice within the literature on market orders. While political economy perspectives emphasize the value of water vending in weak institutional contexts, they do little to address how such practices are perceived by urban populations. They shed little light on the nature of the "market order" (see Hayek et al., 2014) that is observed in circumstances where vending practices compliment centralized water supply systems. I then contextualize Samandar Colony's history of development, describing how everyday life in the settlement is characterized by multiple overlaps between the formal regulatory state – its rules, laws, and representatives – and various relational networks of political support, friendship, and kinship that often connect residents to the state bureaucracies and resources. Focusing on an old part of the settlement known as Hindu Para, I then show how this complexity increases uncertainty in terms of daily water access as residents must simultaneously negotiate a variety of legal frameworks and political relationships to secure this precious resource. As small-scale vendors become the only reliable method of access in these circumstances, the remainder of this chapter shows that purchasing vendor water is neither an instance of everyday resistance nor quiescence, but purposively coping with precarity.

Market Orders

In *The Fatal Conceit* (2012 [1988]), Austrian-born economist Friedrich von Hayek argued that markets, free of cumbersome regulations, were a natural and highly effective source of political order. Railing against the evils of socialism, Hayek argued that price signals for goods and services in a capitalist system were capable of conveying information in a

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the coping mechanisms people adopt in such situations. While the former amount to defensive acts – through everyday language and practice – that criticize the abuse of power, the latter are ways in which people seek to manage or improve their lives.

way that no central planning agency or individual ever could. As such, free markets, and the moral, legal, and political structures that upheld them were the life blood of "extended order of human cooperation" (Ibid: 6). Over a decade later, Hernando De Soto (2002, 2003) built on Hayek's ideas to argue that markets were a source of subaltern agency and ingenuity. In contexts rife with cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, exclusionary laws, and weak state institutions, De Soto claimed market logics allowed the urban poor to efficiently secure opportunities for trade as well as resources like housing and water (see Portes and Schuffler, 1993). Hayek and De Soto's ideas have considerable currency when it comes to explaining how water – a resource associated with the possibility of violent conflict – is allocated in the contemporary urban south. With centralized urban water supply systems "splintering" and failing under the weight of urbanization (see Graham and Marvin, 2001) the urban poor have resorted to various kinds of water vending practices (see Kjellén et al., 2009).[60] Here, private actors operate on a small scale by securing water through a combination of sources such as wells, boreholes, and city pipes before delivering it through artisanal means like push carts and tankers in low-income settlements. Once considered a temporary solution to urban water provision, such vending practices are now seen as an important source of access for urban populations in the developing world (see Ayalew et al., 2014; Casey et al., 2006; Ishaku et al., 2010; Onyenechere et al., 2012; Vasquez at al., 2009; Whittington et al., 1991). Indeed, development practitioners see small scale vending as an "acceptable path to achieving the [Millennium Development Goals] target" in rapidly urbanizing contexts (Ahmad, 2017: 1192; see also McGranahan, 2006; Wutich et al., 2016). Read in the light of Hayek and De Soto's veneration of the market, water vending can be seen as an

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[60] There are regulated practices as well in which governments and municipal departments contract water utility management out to the private sector (Marin, 2008). Though these "public-private partnerships" remain a subject of controversy – not least because of the political dimensions and skewed incentives undergirding them (see Adams and Zulu, 2015; Bakker, 2010; Castro, 2008) – the private sector's role in urban water provision is nevertheless recognized as crucial in expanding access in the underserved peripheries of the urban south (Jensen, 2017).

agentic response that fills gaps in inefficient water supply systems and also establishes political order by effectively allocating a scarce resource. In Samandar Colony, too, smallscale water vending is ubiquitous. One can often see pushcarts operating in the wee hours of the morning or in the late evening, moving from one narrow street to the other as households purchase individual jerry cans to fulfill their daily needs. The likes of De Soto and Hayek would therefore not be surprised when confronted with the lack of overt water conflict in Samandar Colony. For them, Samandar Colony's hydraulic order can succinctly be explained by the entrepreneurial vending practices of the urban poor that supplant inefficient municipal services.

But an opposing view holds that unregulated water vending has a deeply marginalizing impact on the urban poor (Altenburg and Drachenfels, 2006). Water vending is associated with a "poverty premium" where the poor pay more for water supplied by vendors than they would for either municipal public or privatized supplies (Braimah et al., 2018; Mitlin et al., 2019). Moreover, water from small-scale vendors poses significant health risks as it is often not purified and collected through hygienic sources (Constantine et al., 2017). As such, the received knowledge of water vendors filling gaps in a centralized supply system does not account for how urban populations view their need to purchase water amidst these challenges.

Moreover, as Bolivia's infamous water wars, "service delivery protests" in Johannesburg, and contentious responses to privatization efforts in cities like Manila and Jakarta show, the commodification of water – either through the official route of privatization or other means like "corporatization" – is its own source of violence.[61] In Samandar Colony, when the ubiquitous presence of small-scale vendors commodifies this precious resource beyond the ability to pay while also adding non-financial costs

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[61] In fact, a growing body of scholarship has either directly or indirectly associated water commodification with rioting, protests, and civil unrest in South Africa (Bond and Dugard, 2007; Von Schnitzler, 2016), Latin America (Olivera and Lewis, 2004) and in general (Barlwo, 2001).

related to health risks and perceived political marginalization, the prospect of violence over uncertain water services becomes far more likely. Certainly, negative assessments of water vending are evidence of a distinct source of grievance for the settlement's residents; one that crystalizes a view of state institutions as neglectful and corrupt. In doing so, water vending as a practice may actively facilitate, rather than impede, the link between uncertain access to water on one hand, and conflict in the form of protests and riots on the other (see Conca, 2012; Gizelis and Wooden, 2010).

In the sections that follow, I therefore address the puzzle of hydraulic order in Samandar Colony by adopting a mode of inquiry that emphasizes the importance of meaning-making processes to causal explanations of social and political phenomenon.[62] This approach moves beyond the objectively observable forms of access that are assumed to prevent overt water conflict simply because they allocate a precious resource, to the everyday meanings and experiences of the settlement's residents. In short, I turn attention to the lived experience of everyday water access in Samandar Colony.

Everyday Uncertainty

With the Arabian Sea to its south, a natural deep water port to the west, and Karachi's endless urban sprawl towards the north and east, the settlement I refer to as Samandar Colony was initially part of collection of mud flats at the city's southwestern edge. Like much of Karachi, however, the port and its surrounding areas grew exponentially after Pakistan's independence in 1947. Samandar Colony itself began as a small community of Hindu, Muslim and Christian families resettled in 1980. Throughout the 1990s, Samandar

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[62] I draw here on methodological approaches which emphasize the importance of meaning-making in causal explanations (Norman, 2015; Spector, 2017). Here, causality is not understood as a generalizable relationship between two variables, but as contextualized *causes* which are based in how actors make sense of their worlds (Schwartz-Shea, 2012). As Edward Schatz (2015) further suggests, "causality-oriented work in the social sciences simply must attend to meaning making processes if it is to be credible."

Colony quickly became a highly densified area that various religious and ethnic groups called home. These demographic developments were facilitated by ad-hoc changes in the settlement's built form (figure 3.2 below). While some older residents began to convert their mud huts into concrete structures with additional floors to accommodate growing families, others decided to rent newly-constructed rooms or homes to rural migrants arriving from Sindh and Pakistan's northern areas. Meanwhile, the Soviet – Afghan War brought an influx of refugees to Karachi, some of whom settled in Samandar Colony or on its periphery by reclaiming land around the marshes that still existed toward the settlement's north. With a growing population, the settlement also became home to schools, shops, roadside restaurants, a large contingent of oil tanker mechanics (due in part to the settlement's proximity to the port's oil terminal), and, more recently, a number of high-rise apartment buildings in an ongoing effort to "densify" Karachi. Once a landscape of mud huts in the middle of thick vegetation, Samandar Colony turned into a densely-populated urban environment with concrete structures in the space of thirty-five years.

As such, Samandar Colony is illegible according to many basic benchmarks such as population registers, household sizes, and ethnic composition. For instance, demographic data for the settlement is either outdated or non-existent.[63] Journalistic accounts and popular discourses for their part describe settlement like Samandar Colony

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[63] Controversy continues to surround the results of the 2017 Pakistan census, particularly in Karachi (Ghori, 2017). There is also a dearth of demographic data by ethnicity from government sources like the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Board of Revenue, and Election Commission of Pakistan. Official datasets offer ethnic breakdowns by "mother tongue" at the provincial level, thus excluding non-provincialized languages – like Gujari and Kutchi as spoken in Samandar Colony. Scholarly datasets, meanwhile, organize ethnic makeup by large administrative units, like city districts, rather than smaller, town or union council levels (Gayer, 2014; Gazdar, 2014). Nevertheless, district-level data suggests that Karachi South, where Samandar Colony is located, has experienced considerable demographic change since 1980. For instance, based on language as a measure of diversity, Niazi and Azad (2018) find that, in addition to increases in Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto Balochi and Bhravi speakers, the population speaking "other" languages has increased from 4.56% to 24.6% in District South.

as a home to poor populations who lack legal tenure in the city and engage in extralegal and sometimes illegal activities.[64]

But descriptions of Samandar Colony as juxtaposed against legal and "planned" parts of Karachi make little sense given the settlement's complex history of development. Despite its growth coming from successive periods of migration, the settlement has emerged as a product of both formal planning initiatives and extralegal, indeed sometimes *illegal* practices. For instance, Samandar Colony was initially part of a housing initiative from 1972-1985, enacted by the newly formed Master Planning Department (MPD), to manage Karachi's "squatter" population (Hasan, 2000). Samandar Colony's residents were moved from an area called Ismail Goth, where residents had been living since before the 1947 Partition of India, to 60-square yard plots at the city's (then) southwestern periphery. But, while Samandar Colony began life as an officially sanctioned resettlement project carried out by the MPD, not all of it is classified as a "planned" area in the sense of being built-up, provided infrastructure, and generally developed directly by state institutions (see Ahmed, 2008). Instead, to solve Karachi's escalating housing problem, the MPD simply shifted working-class and poor populations to new tracks of land at the city's then periphery, with Hindu Para emerging as one of the communities in this initial resettlement in 1980. Much of Samandar Colony, in turn, was developed by state officials working with middlemen, political patrons, and residents themselves; water and sanitation infrastructures were laid under the patronage of political parties hoping to expand their voting base; concrete houses were constructed by bribing state building control officials; roads were built as families threw dirt on marshy

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[64] These narratives are supported by scholarly accounts of marginalized settlements in cities around the world, See in this vein Anand (2017), Auyero and Swinton (2009) and Endo (2014).

reclaimed lands. Much of this ad-hoc development was carried out with residents themselves bearing the costs of labor and materials.[65]

Figure 3.1: Ad-hoc construction in Hindu Para (photo by author)

Despite its appearance as an unplanned settlement, however, Samandar Colony is not *illegal* in the eyes of the state. While it is true that the original community of families resettled by the planning department later expanded through encroachments and illegal sub-divisions of state land, these areas are "regularized" according to the 1987 Sindh

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[65] Scholarly and journalistic accounts describe in great detail how such extralegal development works in Karachi (Anwar, 2014; Gazdar and Mallah, 2011; Hasan, 1989). Acting as brokers, fixers, and patrons, middlemen provide populations with access to housing and public services by working closely with low-level state officials. In the process, they become powerful political actors themselves.

Katchi Abadis Act. In other words, they are legalized urban areas that are protected from eviction under the land use category of regularized *katchi abadi.* This means that residents who have been living in communities like Hindu Para since March 1985 or earlier are eligible for 99-year land leases and that the settlement as a whole benefits from KWSB provided water as well as trunk sanitation mains.[66] Many residents of Hindu Para secured their legal tenure and service access as part of the initial resettlement, but subsequent, "unofficial" migrants to Samandar Colony have taken advantage of the regularization process.

It was only after I met Yawar Bhai in 2018 after a couple of fieldwork trips to Karachi that I realized Samandar Colony was impossible to dichotomize as either a planned/legal or unplanned/illegal settlement. Sitting on the smooth, concrete floor of the two-story home he had built, Yawar Bhai began like many others interviewees when I asked them to describe their earliest memories of Samandar Colony. He explained, for example, how "Hindu Para", a collection of fourteen lanes at the very edge of Samandar Colony where resettled families were given 60- square yard plots in 1980, was initially surrounded by thick vegetation but soon became overcome by concrete structures. Continuing, to describe the area's history, Yawar Bhai angrily explained how "Hindu Para" had received its name:

> The Pathans [Pashtuns] all call if Hindu Para, they don't even ask what area this is, what block it is, although it is called [official name with address]! From here ahead the KPT [Karachi Port Trust] land starts. Many people living here are Muslim, but they call it Hindu Para. Why? Because they thought because a few people are Hindu here everyone else must be Hindu as well. At the time we moved here they [the government] gave us plots for Rs1,200. Now these plots are worth Rs25 lakhs.

Yawar Bhai's comments reveal the sort of ethnic diversity and tensions that have characterized unplanned urbanization in Samandar Colony. But, more significantly, in pointing to how a certain part of the settlement has been mischaracterized based on an

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[66] I discuss the dynamics of Samandar Colony's bulk water provision in chapter 4.

opinion of who lives there (poor Hindus without legal tenure), Yawar Bhai also contested

the notion that Hindu Para as a whole was an *illegal* area. Indeed, Yawar Bhai was quick

to describe the settlement's official name in response to a segment of the population

calling it Hindu Para. Such comments resonate with many residents of Hindu Para who

claimed to be legal residents of the city. At the same time, however, my continuing

conversation with Yawar Bhai revealed that residents therein often faced difficulty in

accessing the benefits of urban citizenship. For instance, in his continuing tirade about

the history of Hindu Para, Yawar Bhai explained how difficult it was for his son to get a

national identity (*shanakhti*) card, a document issued to all citizens of Pakistan:

> We don't even see the faces of our councilors anymore. They [the government]
> give us such difficulty even to make ID cards… They tell us to bring our father's
> ID card, then our grandfathers' ID card. But if we've never even seen their breed,
> how we will get their ID cards? I went to NADRA [National Database &
> Registration Authority] to get my son's ID card made with my own card, my
> wife's card, and my parents' cards. Our cards say [settlement name] on them.
> They told me to bring ID cards for my parents' grandparents as well! I said that
> was at the time of the British, I don't even know what they looked like! They told
> me the ID wouldn't be issued without them. So, I didn't submit my son's form.
> Then, our councilors brought a NADRA truck [to Samandar Colony]. We
> submitted the paperwork to them but who knows, it's been two years and we still
> don't have an ID card. We don't even know where to get the card, who to ask, or
> what to do. I had to do a lot of hard work and pay [councilors] Rs3,600 of my
> own money for that ID card.[67]

As Yawar Bhai's account shows, the barriers he faced to secure an official document

for his son did not only emanate from state bureaucracies that expected him to produce

excessive documentation to prove his identity, but from other sources as well. Yawar

Bhai was *also* forced to navigate extralegal economies of exchange with state officials like

councilors by paying large sums of money or relying on their patronage to try and secure

his son's national identity card. Indeed, Hindu Para's residents are embedded in multiple

overlaps between the state's rules, laws, and bureaucracies, and the relationships of

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[67] National Identity Cards are crucial in obtaining other documents like passports. In addition,
they are also required to open bank accounts, purchase property, and secure access to public
services. Citizens of Pakistan can prove their status by having their application attested by an
attested officer or providing the identity card of a blood relative.

political support, friendship, and kinship that remain part of the settlement's everyday fabric. What Yawar Bhai's account sheds light on in this respect is the unique set of *challenges* such an overlap poses when one seeks to lay claim to state services or resources. Existing between the dichotomies of planned/legal and unplanned/extralegal, Samandar Colony's residents are vulnerable to both the discipline of state institutions and the whims of "brokers" and political patrons who remain crucial in helping urban populations make claims to state resources.[68] But this position is often missed by scholarly accounts that frame claim-making in terms of the language of, for example, "civil" and "political" society which reflects a dichotomous existence of regulated and unregulated spaces, relationships and practices.[69] Such descriptions elide the kaleidoscopic and deeply uncertain lived experiences of access and belonging in Karachi's *katchi abadis*. The following sections elaborate this by turning attention to the material realities of everyday water access in Hindu Para.

Everyday Hydrology

For the families that were part of the initial resettlement, Hindu Para was a dream come true. With open spaces, friendly neighbors, and easy access to work, older residents nostalgically describe life in the 1980s as full of prosperity. Such prosperity was no doubt bolstered by the overabundance of water in the area. Samandar Colony was initially spared the challenges faced by Karachi's various satellite towns in the 1960s and 1970s. Like the satellite towns, Hindu Para first experience piped water through communal taps

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[68] As Marilyn Strathern (1991: 584) writes, western perceptions of personhood which inevitable rely on some notion of citizenship fail to capture the experience of "dividuals" or "fractal persons"; a state of being in which persons and social groups may simultaneously occupy multiple, often contradictory social, legal, and political positions.

[69] The implication that legal status determines how resources are accessed is an implication of both postcolonial (Chatterjee, 2006) and Marxists (Harvey 2001; 2013) perspectives on the city. But, as Lisa Björkman (2015) demonstrates in her ethnography of Mumbai's water, a structure's legal status cannot predict whether or not it will receive piped water.

in each lane. Unlike the satellite towns, however, it was easy to manage and distribute the supply of water via communal taps in Hindu Para given the comparatively small size of the community. Describing what life was like in those early, pioneering years, older residents spoke of a sense of community and friendship as families gathered around the taps twice a day (once in the morning and once in the evening) to fill their water containers. The water itself was described as sweet, instantly able to quench one's thirst, and abundant in supply. Over time, however, the lines dried up. One of the first to settle the marshes and jungles of Samandar Colony, Kalan Sahib, now an old man who used a walker to move around his home, described how the water, once free and abundant in communal taps, was now nothing more than a distant memory. "We had so much water [before]" he would exclaim in our conversations about Hindu Para's early days. "The uneducated had never seen water like this!" When I inquired whether he received potable water, Kalan Sahib lamented that the water lines laid in the 90s to replace the system of communal taps had long been dry.

Things began to change in the 1990s as community leaders and political cadres, with development funds from political parties like the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), sought to, as some cynical interlocutors explained "build their vote banks." Hindu Para's water infrastructure correspondingly received an overhaul. The old pipes carrying water to the hand pumps were not replaced, but simply forgotten as community leaders, local patrons, and political parties worked together to lay new pipes over them. Unlike the hand pumps for which residents had to line up to receive water, the new pipes were to deliver water directly into people's homes. Local leaders and PPP workers urged residents to take advantage of the ongoing development work by making an investment in individual household connections. As party workers laid secondary lines roughly 6 inches in diameter in the settlement's streets and lanes, Hindu Para's residents had the option to pay for the labor and material required to secure individual connections of 1 –

4 inches. I got a sense of the excitement surrounding individualized access to piped water when I spoke to Ishaq Bhai, a former PPP worker who had helped several Hindu Para residents establish home connections at the time. As Ishaq Bhai explained, residents were advised to take advantage of the modernizing infrastructure in Hindu Para:

> Before, there used to be plenty of water. Around 20 years ago I connected many people to the water line, and they used those lines. On Eid, our [home] tanks used to overflow with water and I used to tell people to get their connections because there was plenty of water to be had!'

Caught up in the excitement of the moment, Hindu Para's residents were, however, soon let down as their individual pipes slowly dried up over the next decade. Residents described, for instance, how after a few years of receiving piped water, their home connections barely remained pressurized for five minutes at pumping times compared to an hour when the secondary pipes were initially laid.

Method	Piped Water	Non-piped water
Regulated	1) Receiving water through a functioning, legal piped connection	2) Securing government issued "relief tankers" by filing out an application
Deregulated[70]	3) Unbilled, "illegal" connections to mainlines where there the water pressure is high	4) Free water from community tanks built and filled by political parties 5) Purchasing water from small-scale water vendors operating donkey carts 6) Undocumented bore-well connections shared between neighbors

Figure 3.2: Possible methods of water access in Samandar Colony

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[70] Deregulated methods include both legal and illegal access. For instance, while water provided by political parties is not illegal, it is not overseen by the city or provincial governments. Hence, it falls into deregulated access.

This is not to say that Hindu Para's pipes have remained perpetually dry. There have been periods of resurgence where home connections produced water regularly for a few months here and there. In general, however, Hindu Para's residents have resorted to a variety of methods of access in the last twenty-five years. Indeed, outside the seemingly obvious route of accessing water through official, functioning connections to municipal infrastructure, there are several other regulated – in the sense of being overseen by state institutions and controlled through procedures like billing and petitioning – and deregulated ways in which residents can theoretically secure this precious resource as (figure 3.2)
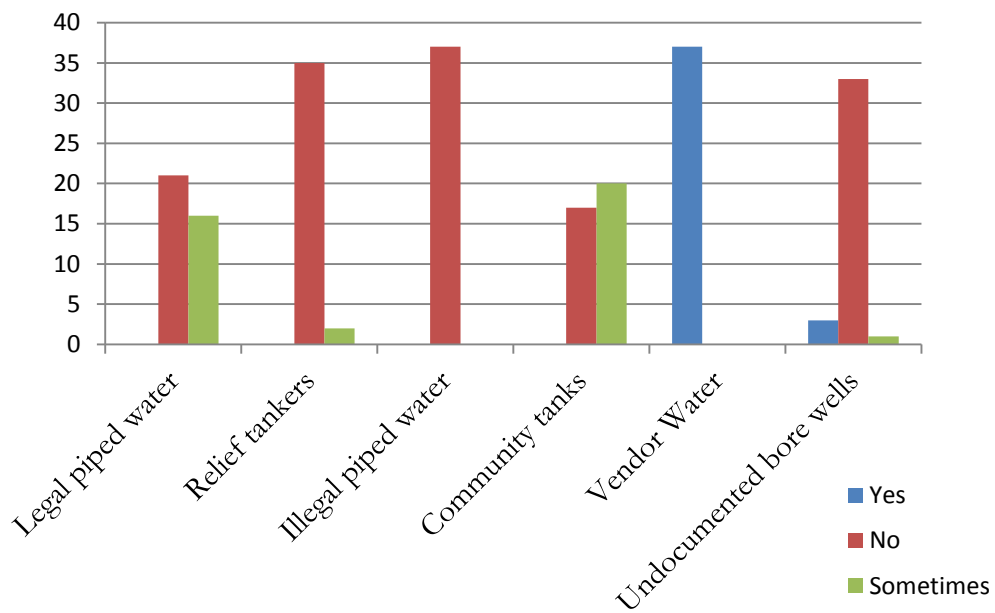
Figure 3.3: Methods of water access for 37 households in Samandar Colony

It is important to note that not all methods of access produce the same quality and quantity of water. Based on a survey of 37 households in the settlement, for instance, I found that a large proportion of Hindu Para's residents relied on small-scale vendors, and, to a lesser extent, on methods like bore-well connections and relief tankers (figure 3.4). Below, I flesh out these survey results by drawing on interview data collected from

households in Hindu Para. In describing the relative effectiveness of these different methods, residents' lived experiences more generally demonstrate overlaps in the laws, official procedures, bureaucracies on one hand, and the relationships of friendship and political patronage on the other that characterize the material realties of water access. Indeed, even methods of access that can seemingly be classified as either regulated or deregulated, often paradoxically rely on a variety of procedures, actors, and practices to work.

Methods 2: Beginning with regulated alternatives to piped water, "relief tankers" – a city-wide initiative by the Karachi Municipal Corporation to address the lack of piped water by supplying settlements and individual homes with water through officially sanctioned water tankers, have disappeared entirely from Hindu Para. For instance, as described by Sumit, a young father of two who previously used this method to access water, tankers from the government never arrive after applications are made:

> Sumit: First the government used to give it [water]. We used our ID card copies and they used to bring water [in tankers] and give it [to us]. But that has stopped as well.
> Me: Could you say a little more about that?
> Sumit: What we used to do is take our paid bill with us, with the house number, and a copy of a national identity card [to the district deputy commissioner's office]. Then, after one or two or three days, whenever they had time, they brought us water. Now, that has stopped as well. Now when we go and wait in line and ask for water we don't get anything. Even now we go [with all the documents] and make the application. They tell us the water will come after one or two weeks, but it doesn't come. So, I say what is the point in going now? Dragging my father who is old in the heat to go and wait in lines…

As Sumit claims, despite filling out all the legal requirements to secure a relief tanker (legal tenure with proof of address and a paid water bill from the KWSB), there is no guarantee water can be reliably accessed in this way. Certainly, many residents, including a water board official in the area, described how relief tankers once issued in their names had stopped in 2015. A local councilor claimed the tankers had purposefully been stopped by PPP leadership in the area so that the newly-elected union council vice-

chairman could profit from his private tanker businesses. When a group of residents visited the Karachi's District South office to inquire about the tankers, they were told in no uncertain terms by the deputy commissioner's office that applications from Hindu Para would not be processes without approval from the party. "They told us to bring as many people as we wanted [to protest]," the councilor said. "But nothing could be done without approval from Bilawal House [referring to PPP leadership]." I was unable to verify the councilor's story. But what mattered was that securing relief tankers, an otherwise "regulated" mode of access, required more than just filing formal paperwork. In addition, securing a relief tanker also required marshalling the influence of a powerful political patron who could force the bureaucracy into action.

Figure 3.4: An undocumented connection in Samandar Colony (photo by author)

Method 3: Despite widespread accusations of water theft, I saw little first-hand evidence that unbilled or "illegal" connections were widespread in Hindu Para. This is not to say that undocumented connections weren't in operation throughout Samandar Colony. Indeed, pipes surreptitiously connecting homes to water mains are easy to spot

in places where there were known trunk mains (see figure 3.3 below). But, despite my friendliness with residents and local leaders, I did not gain the sort of internal observer perspective that would have granted me access to witness an illegal connection being made in person. Even so, this method of access, though by no means a figment of collective imagination, was clearly not open to all of Samandar Colony's residents, least of all residents of Hindu Para. This is because securing an undocumented connection required the patronage of a local councilor or elected representative that could prevent the police from destroying the illegitimate connection.

Many of Hindu Para's residents simply did not possess this sort of political capital. As one older resident explained, "We don't have an illegal connection because we're scared we might get caught by the police." Even if residents did have the required political capital, given Hindu Para's location at the very edge of Samandar Colony, securing a connection to a pressurized segment of the mainline far upstream would require significant financial resources to hire the labor and procure the necessary materials. Of significance here, however, is that otherwise illegal and deregulated connections still depended on aspects of the formal state; not only did securing such a connection require the protection of a local councilor, it also relied on the city's infrastructure.

Method 4: An overwhelming majority of households claimed they received water from political party-run tanks only "sometimes." When I returned to Karachi for fieldwork in 2018, just a few months shy of the general elections I found that while household connections still ran dry, many residents were getting water through tanks filled by various political parties. In addition to the two tanks already in operation under the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) patronage, the PPP had constructed a brand new tank from which to disburse water secured from government-sponsored or private tankers. But this method was, at best, a temporary measure that did little to resolve Hindu Para's water needs on a more permanent basis. For one, the maximum of two

jerry cans per households were barely enough for the toilet needs of a family of five, let alone cooking and cleaning. Many households thus had to combine this method of access with another. Moreover, though it seemed like these tanks were meant to supply water indiscriminately, in actuality, each tank supplied water to a select parts of Hindu Para. For instance, the PPP tank provided water to houses in the southeastern portion of Hindu Para, turning all others away. The PTI tanks, meanwhile, covered up to three lanes on Hindu Para's northern and southern sides respectively. As such, this method left many households to fend for their own water needs. Again, however, it was apparent that a deregulated (though not illegal) method relied on a regulated sources – such as tankers from the government or the private sector – to produce water.[71]

Methods 5-6: Of the remaining methods for accessing water, residents are left with the option of either purchasing water from small-scale vendors, or using bore-well connections. Though the latter produces water reliably, it comes with its own set of constraints. First, not all households have borehole connections. Establishing these connections requires time, money, and personal effort. Moreover, for those households that have made the investment, borehole connections are not a suitable substitute for piped water. First, these connections produce salty water that is unsuitable for cooking due Samandar Colony's Para's proximity to the sea. Second, the silt in the water table often jams hand pumps, forcing residents to pool their financial resources to hire a plumber for repair work.

In Hindu Para, the regulated or deregulated nature of a particular method of access does not determine the quality and quantity of water it produces. Rather, access for residents depends on a variety of factors including the performance of city infrastructure, a requirement for particular kinds of paperwork or documentation, and the presence (or

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[71] I explore the perceptions of these tanks in chapter five where I address the 2018 general election in more detail.

lack thereof) of patronized relationships. In Hindu Para, for instance, the patronage of political party leadership is critical in securing relief tankers which residents should otherwise be able to secure simply by producing a paid water bill and ID card (method 2). By contrast, though anyone can surreptitiously secure an unauthorized connection to a bulk main, such an action is risky and unlikely to succeed without the tacit approval of state officials like councilors or members of parliament (method 3). Finally, while local tanks filled by the patronage of political party workers can prove to be a useful source of water, they rely on state sanctioned infrastructures to first secure this precious resource (method 4).

Attention to the material realities of water access in Hindu Para thus reveals a symbiotic relationship between the so-called "formal" and "informal" city. What is clear in Hindu Para, however, is that this overlap places unique constraints on how water is accessed daily.[72] Indeed, water access in Hindu Para is characterized by a situation where the urban poor must constantly negotiate multiple sources of uncertainty including unreliable city infrastructures, fickle bureaucracies, the whims of political patrons, the power of the police, and the dubious support of local state officials. Figure 3.4 above displays the constrictive consequences of this uncertainty as Hindu Para's residents are forced to rely on the only method of access that works consistently: purchasing water from vendors. The following section highlights how purchasing vendor water, while perceived as a source of grievance, is simultaneously a way for residents to manage their hydraulic uncertainty.

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[72] Recent scholarship in urban studies demonstrates how populations caught between various dichotomies of legality and extralegality draw on *both* institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of claim making (see Anand, 2017; Naqvi, 2017). Here I draw attention to how such a liminal position might also result in significant barriers that need to be negotiated in accessing urban goods and services.

Interlude: Water Vendors

> The informal sector is almost completely comprised of tankers. These tankers supply water legally or illegally, but they do so in collusion with the KWSB [Karachi water and Sewerage Board]. They must pay the state money to operate their business. They can't operate without patronage. Rangers [paramilitary force], police, KWSB, MNAs, MPAs, everyone is involved in tankers. Then you have other aspects. For example, official water stand-posts have long lines which are managed by entrepreneurs that charge a premium on supposedly free water.[73]

Small-scale vendors are ubiquitous in Karachi. Though described as unregulated actors operating outside the legal domain of the state, these entrepreneurs depend on both city infrastructure and actors such as legislators, police officers, and water board officials. Investigative journalism as well as research conducted by urban activists, such as Parveen Rahman, has made considerable headway in fleshing out the supply chain for water vending practices in Karachi.[74] It all begins with private actors securing water from various bulk sources such as reservoirs, city pipes, official hydrants, or illegal hydrants. This water is then transported across the city through water tankers that range in size from 1,000 gallons to 12,000 gallons. Households in the city's upscale areas or apartment complexes purchase the entire content of a single tanker to fill large underground or over-ground tanks. In settlements like Samandar Colony, where such tanks are few and far between, tanker operators sell their supply to small-scale vendors operating within specific communities – often in a small range of streets or houses. These small vendors then sell the water from push carts (figure 3.6). According to journalistic accounts, this supply chain involves both private actors like water "barons", tanker drivers, and small-scale vendors, and state officials like police officers and water board workers who engage in bribery or protection payments (see Ahmed, 2003; Ahmed, 2017; Rahman, 2008).

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[73] Interview with urban activist Arif Hasan, June 2017
[74] Indeed, there is a working theory that Rahman's work on Karachi's water tankers – including here documentation of the state officials involved in an illicit water business – led to her murder in 2013.

Though small-scale vendors have always been present in Hindu Para, it is only in the last 15 years that they have become the major providers of water in the settlement. Now, these vendors can be seen all over Samandar Colony (and, indeed, other areas of Karachi), pushing carts carrying distinctive blue jerry that sell for between Rs25 – Rs50 depending on the labor involved to carry the water to people's homes. In 2018, I spoke to Govinda, a small-scale vendor operating in Hindu Para. Govinda described himself as a local leader who had started a small water vending business to supply households in his vicinity. Relaxing on his *charpai* in the open air, Govinda explained why he started his vending business:

> There is no other water here. There hasn't been line water in this area for close to thirty years. Even when the water does come, it comes for about 10 minutes through a tiny pipe and smells of sewage…This is the tail end. Even when there is water, it just doesn't reach us here. As you can see, I started this business out of desperation. Before [this business], people would wake up for work and run around trying to find water for the day. Now, they know there is water here. They can come back from a long day at work and the water will be readily available to buy.

Like the other small-scale water suppliers I spoke to, Govinda described the temporary, even humanitarian nature of his business. As he explained, his goal was not profit (because he had not expanded his business), but to fulfill his responsibilities as a local leader. That didn't mean, however, that people from adjacent streets couldn't come to him and buy water. Nor did Govinda shy away from claiming that he was running a business in a market where customers were desperate for his services, and where profits were not only used to cover his expenditures (paying for tankers, labor and transport materials like carts, cans and pipes) but also supplement his household income. Nevertheless, Govinda threatened to use his influence to withhold votes in the future if state officials did not fix the piped water situation.

While Govinda described his water business as a necessary alternative to the contaminated, intermittent supplies coming from household pipes, his customers

described the product he was selling as perhaps the worst substitute for potable water. Ordinary residents, regardless of their ethnic or religious membership, often claimed vendor water was dirty, expensive and unusable for everyday household needs. In direct contradiction to Govinda's humanitarian claims, some residents further pointed out that some vendors hiked up the price of a single drum by as much as 50% in times of shortage. Alia Aunty, an old widow who took care of her three grandchildren, described how the inconvenience with vendor water did not stop at short-term financial constraints. Instead, purchasing vendor water created significant long-term burdens for many residents:

> All our money is spent on water. Now, when we earn, should we pay for education, food, rent, or water? If we take care of our children, we cannot pay their school fees. If we cannot pay their school fees, they cannot go to school. If we get sick and don't go to work ourselves, the *bangle wala* [rich people] tell us to stay home and not come anymore. So, what should poor people do? What can we do? It's water. Even if it was Rs100 for a gallon we'd still pay.

For Hindu Para's residents, there are multiple problems associated with vendor water. Not only do families have to put up with dirty water, they must also find the time, labor and, most importantly, money to purchase this water on a daily basis. These problems are made worse by the deregulated nature of vending in the settlement where market forces, contra much of the received wisdom in development circles (see Kjellén et al., 2009 for an overview), fail to produce affordable access to clean water. With no official price controls in operation, a single jerry can is known to sell for up to Rs50 in summer months when demand for water is high across the city. But more than the financial burdens it creates, Alia Aunty also describes how continuing to purchase vendor water has disastrous consequences for households by straddling them with short-term and long-term burdens. From immediate concerns like being able to pay for food and rent, to the ability to plan for their children's education, the cost of vendor water can determine

the ability to live a decent life. As such, having to purchase vendor water is a unique source of grievance for many of Hindu Para's residents.

Figure 3.5: A vendor distributes water in Hindu Para (photo by author)

And yet, vendors continue to roam the streets of Hindu Para. Despite recognizing the burdens of purchasing expensive and sometimes extremely dirty water daily, residents continue to justify their actions as a necessity in order to survive. The remainder of this chapter shows that rather than an instance of quiescence or subversion, purchasing water is a way for Hindu Para's residents to actionably manage the wider uncertainty of daily water access in the settlement.

Helping Oneself ["Apni Madat Āap"]

Long before Samandar Colony received a dedicated pumping station for its water needs, residents of Hindu Para had relied on the influence of community leaders to secure state resources. Though these individuals often did not always hold positions as state officials, they wielded considerable authority over residents. In our conversations about the settlement's early history, Babu Najib, a frail old man who was bedridden due to a stroke in his sixties, spoke of how these "*barāy*" lobbied on the community's behalf for things like water and sanitation. He recalled, for instance, how the village head, a man named Saleh Mohammad, had convinced several families to move from Ismail Goth to the 60-square yard settlement that would later be called Hindu Para. After the resettlement, Saleh Mohammad became the de-facto community representative, often advising families who to vote for to secure things like infrastructural improvements and jobs in their new living conditions. On a few occasions, Saleh Mohammad even campaigned for his own candidacy as an elected official. Though Babu Najib was, at times, critical of Saleh Mohammad's record ("would we be buying water if he had done something for us?"), he described Hindu Para's early years as filled with prosperity (using the Urdu word *barkat*):

> In those times Rs100 could help your run a house and you could still save money. Today, Rs500 will get barely get you enough households supplies to fill one hand. Before, it used to be that there was one earner who could feed ten people in the household. I used to be the only earner. And now, three or four of my children are working too. What I did to work and get my children on their feet, you can tell there is a huge difference between now and then. The thing is there was *barkat* [prosperity] then. Even though we didn't have enough money, whatever money we had there was *barkat* in it. Now, even if you have a salary of Rs20, 000 you will be crying. Now things are different. The thing is that there is no one to support us now either. They have all passed on. These new people, they do nothing. The people that we have now – look in our own community – the do nothing for us… This is why we miss the days that have passed. We miss those people who told us a time like this would come.

In retelling these rosy first-hand accounts of Hindu Para's history here, I do not claim that the settlement's early years were characterized by effective community organizing to

access housing and public services. Instead, I highlight how a collective memory regarding Hindu Para's prosperous early years compares to more recent narratives emphasizing an individualized sense of self-help, particularly when it came to everyday water access.[75] For instance, when I spoke to Bano and Hashim, a young couple with two children who worked as domestic help in Karachi's upscale housing settlements, they explained how purchasing vendor water was the only way of ensuring they met their household's needs:

> Me: How is the water situation here?
> Bano: In my opinion it is bad.
> Hashim: It is very bad. There is no water. We have to buy. The water that we should easily get we are not getting. If we got water a lot of our problems would be solved. The main thing we are worried about is water. Because if we don't get water everything else becomes a problem, cooking, cleaning, everything…
> Bano: And if we can't buy water then things are really bad. In the summer, if the sellers don't have tankers then we have to go very far and get water. Then after a few days they'll come to us and say: "this is how much a gallon costs (Rs50) if you want it buy it, if you don't want it, don't buy it."
> Hashim: Then we have to buy it out of desperation [*majboori*].

The couple went on to describe how the need to "help themselves" by purchasing vendor water emerged in the perceived lack of community organizing initiatives of the past:

> Hashim: Our *barāy* don't do anything for water. Even if they say [they will do something], nothing happens. They keep quiet. They say, what's the point? They say, let things be because nothing's going to happen. We're not going to get water. Let things run the way they are running.
> Me: Let things be?
> Bano: Yes, like if there is no water, people are buying water, then who has the time to run here and there and get pushed around. Let things run the way they are running. Let people keep buying water. Nobody is going to do anything for us anyway.
> Me: So, people don't protest?
> Hashim: Who has the time? Nobody protests.
> Bano: You'll never even hear that there was a protest in Hindu Para [laughs]… We do our work and stay in our homes. Whatever problems we have we solve ourselves [*apni madat āap*]. Like water, everyone knows we don't have water but we keep buying it.

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[75] Susan Stewart (1993: 23) reminds us of the power of nostalgia as "ideological reality" that denies historical lived experiences in favor of utopian narratives of the past. As such, the power of nostalgia not only reframes the past, but also shapes how the present is perceived in relation (see Yusuf, 2015).

Like many other residents, Bano and Hashim described their situation as one of futility in terms of political actions like mobilization or lobbying. The lack of potable water continued, they explained, because nobody explored these avenues to try and solve the problem. In doing so, the couple presented an understanding of their precarity as emanating from abjection and collective political paralysis. But, as the conversation continued, often veering into criticisms of local leaders, Bano and Hashim also emphasized how they continued to "help themselves" in such a situation:

> Bano: Now look, the elections are about to happen so the PPP people came and made all these holes [in the roads]. You might have seen all these holes and pipes. In the last election the PTI people were the ones that made these roads!
> Me: So, you're saying they built this road and then broke it again?
> Hashim: Yes.
> Bano: Yes, they just broke it.
> Hashim: All these roads were already built before they broke them.
> Me: But, why break a broken road?
> Bano: To put in new [water] lines. Each party is saying they will do the work. This is what happens in poor people's areas, because we can't tell them to stop. We stick to our work and stay in our homes. Even our *barāy* do the same. Whoever wants they come and break something or build it.
> Hashim: They're looking after themselves, not the poor.
> Bano: They must be getting money from ahead (the party)
> Hashim: But when you ask them [to finish the work], they say they don't have the budget.
> Bano: So, the people have to solve their own problems. *Apni madat āap* [helping themselves]
> Me: Could you say more about *apni madat āap*?
> Bano: Like if someone has a problem, they solve it themselves. They do their own work.
> Me: Do you think this is a good thing?
> Bano: No. Because look at these holes, god forbid a child were to fall in them. We have to close it all ourselves. People from everyone's houses work and plug the holes in their respective areas. They [elected officials, party cadres] don't do the whole work. They break everything and leave. This is what people do here. They help themselves.
> Me: Like you help yourself by fixing these roads, do you also help yourselves in other circumstances as well?
> Bano: Yes, like how we get water. Look, no one is giving us any water, so we are helping ourselves. We are buying water. This is an expenditure as well, isn't it? It ends up being about Rs5,000 a month. Now, the person who has a small salary, what is he expected to do? Should he do a job or feed his kids or buy water? If you think about it, water is the biggest problem here.

As Bano and Hashim noted, Hindu Para's residents often resorted to solving their own problems. Indeed, as I leant through conversations with other families, residents saw helping themselves ["*apni madat āap*"] as more than just a way to address their water woes by purchasing vendor water, but as perhaps the only way to deal with a variety of everyday problems that were otherwise the responsibility of state officials or local leaders to resolve. For instance, Pooja, a woman living with her husband and two young children at Hindu Para's southern edge related a particularly noteworthy example of how she and her neighbors were forced to fix broken sewage connections when elected officials allegedly shrugged of their responsibility.

> Even now, they have ruined our gulley by digging it up. They broke everyone's gutter lines that were working properly. Then the sewage started going everywhere, collecting outside our houses. When the men spoke to them, they didn't listen. Then all the women got together and went to the PPP [Pakistan People's Party] office to tell them about the sewerage problem. But no one came. After they broke the street, everyone fixed their own [sewage] connections by helping themselves [*apni madat āap*]. Even now, they are asking for votes, but they won't fix anything. For instance, we were about to have a family wedding, so we fixed our own gulley. Other people also fixed the gulley for their own needs. Otherwise it would have stayed like this. There was a hole in the middle and mounds of sand on each side. We had to fill it ourselves.

Like Bano and Hashim, Pooja described self-help ["*apni madat āap*"] as a way for residents to solve various kinds of problems pertaining to everyday life including, but not limited to, service delivery As Pooja explained, this approach was not based on collective mobilization. Though residents often spoke to their representatives as a single group with a common concern, when these efforts (often) failed, families solved a problem through individualistic efforts aimed at addressing their own household's needs (such as clearing sewage in front of one's home in advance of a family wedding).

Though the corresponding effort to help themselves certainly comes from a lack of options to solve problems through a combination of institutional and relational forms of claim making, the conversations presented here show that helping oneself ["*apni madat āap*"] is a conscious initiative on the part of residents to counteract uncertainty. Indeed,

the generalized, albeit individualistic approach to dealing with everyday problems by helping oneself shows that residents who purchase vendor water to meet their daily needs are not engaging in everyday acts of resistance against authority figures. Instead, they are purposively managing and coping with conditions beyond their control. Certainly, the conversations presented here show that Hindu Para's residents *do* perhaps engage in subtle acts of resistance, at least in the realm of everyday speech, when they caricature their local leaders. By describing the incompetence of building a road while bungling dozens of water and sewage connections in the process, for example, families can be seen as rebuking authority figures who have the power to enact development plans. Yet, purchasing vendor water in response to dry pipes (or mending sewerage connections based on individual need for that matter) does not amount to an act of subversion in such circumstances. Rather, it is an act of individualistic problem-solving. Framed in the language of helping oneself purchasing vendor water in conditions of uncertainty is a conscious effort by Hindu Para's residents to manage their precarity.

Making Do ["Guzāra"]

A sense of helping oneself when purchasing vendor water often went hand in hand with the need to "make do." I first met Kavitha Aunty in June 2017 while conducting interviews with Hindu Para residents. A young woman at the time of the 1980 resettlement, Kavitha Aunty moved to Hindu Para with her family and eventually married a man from a neighboring Hindu family. Life took an unfortunate turn for Kavitha Aunty when her husband passed away, forcing her to clean people's homes to support her six children. Now an old woman, Kavitha Aunty explained she no longer worked, but was supported by her younger son who earned about Rs10,000 a month. This meager amount, however, did little to cover her bills and rent. Instead, Kavitha

Aunty relied on the kindness of her landlord to make late payments or the indulgence of her neighbors to borrow money when the need arose. Where water was concerned, Kavitha Aunty relied on bore-well connections or, if political parties were distributing water, *awami* tanks. Mostly, however, Kavitha Aunty purchased water from a vendor in her lane. With her monthly water expenditure amounting to roughly Rs4,500 a month – nearly half of her son's income – purchasing water put an inexorable strain on her living conditions. When I met Kavitha Aunty again in 2018, she described how she met such difficult circumstances:

> We buy gallons for Rs30. We are just making do [*guzāra hai*]. We're getting water from here and there to meet our needs. What else can we do [laughs]? The poor have lots of things to worry about [*paraishani*]. We have to worry about things like electricity, things like the rent, whether children have jobs or not… I don't like buying water. But I do it out of necessity [*majboori*].

At first, I found Kavitha Aunty's account to be an example of inaction and dormancy. Given that her precarious financial situation was relatively worse than her neighbors', I had expected to hear far more criticism from her regarding the failings of community leaders and elected officials to provide potable water. Instead, what I heard was akin to a quiet acceptance of her misfortunes – including those stemming from spending nearly half her monthly income on vendor water.

At the same time, however, the language of "making do" Kavitha Aunty deployed also suggested that she was engaged in daily efforts to manage the wider hydraulic uncertainty in Hindu Para. Certainly, purchasing vendor water meant that she had one less concern when she was constantly worrying about paying rent, electricity bills, and whether her son would remain employed. Kavitha Aunty was not alone in this regard. Residents in her gulley as well as throughout Hindu Para routinely described purchasing vendor water in terms of making do ["*guzāra*"] or necessity ["*majboori*"]; a way to tackle the particular problem of daily water access amidst a sea of other concerns. Such narratives were particularly common with women in Hindu Para who were expected to

manage a household's water supplies efficiently on one hand, but who, in a conservative

society, were also unable to freely venture out to purchase more vendor water if the need

arose. For instance, Saima, a young single mother who purchased water daily from

Govinda described how the difficulties of securing vendor water were reproduced along

gendered lines:

> The problem is that ladies can't buy [vendor water]… and the pipe [the vendor]
> uses is not long enough to reach the higher floors. So, [the vendor] sells water to
> people on the ground floor for Rs30, but when he has to carry the water up to
> the second floor he charges Rs35 for his labor. Because of this the problems
> become bigger. Sometimes, we tell our neighbors to bring the water for us, but
> then we have to wait for them. The ladies that stay at home, they manage to get
> water from the donkey cart. But for that they have to stay home. But when we
> have to get it from outside – for instance, when [the water vendor] doesn't have
> any water – then we have to get it from elsewhere in the community or further
> out. Ladies don't go to get that water. Only if there are men can they go and get
> the water. Either we have to wait for the man or the donkey cart. And after about
> 6pm, you can't get any water.

Saima faced many challenges in securing water that other households with higher

incomes and male family members did not. Like Kavitha Aunty, Saima's account also

suggests a resignation to the difficulties stemming from the lack of potable water and the

gendered burdens she was forced to navigate. But, much like Kavitha Aunty, Saima went

on to describe how she focused on managing these difficulties. For instance, Saima

explained that she purchased vendor water despite knowing full well the money she

owed the water board was slowly climbing to an insurmountable sum. She made clear

how she preferred to use what little money she had to continue purchasing vendor water

– regardless of the gendered problems this reliance created for her – rather than paying

her water bills:

> I tear them [water bills] and throw them away. There has been no water for four
> years. If there is no water, why should we pay Rs500 for water? Shouldn't we just
> use that Rs500 to buy water instead? The water has not been coming properly for
> four years. Someone can pay one month without getting water, two months,
> maybe even 6 months. But they're not going to pay for years without getting
> water, are they? Now people think, the water is not coming, so we have no
> choice; we have to go to work, we have to buy water, and we have to make do
> [*guzāra*].

At first glance, it is possible to interpret these responses as quiescence. Like many Hindu Para residents, Kavitha Aunty and Saima can be seen as giving in paying exorbitant sums for water that is dirty – often to the point of being undrinkable – simply because there is no other way to secure this precious resource. But while the language of "making do" suggests a lack of choice, it does not imply what Gaventa (1980: 16-17) describes as "undue apathy about one's situation." In fact, it is quite the opposite; as residents engage in unregulated exchanges of time and money with vendors, they reveal an awareness of their precarity as well as an understanding of how to move through it. This is borne out most clearly in discussions about how paying for water *relieves* the uncertainty stemming not only from a lack of potable water, but also from the general anxieties that many residents face on a daily basis.

In much of the development literature, scholars argue that underserviced populations have an innate "willingness to pay" for services like water (Casey et al., 2006; Vásquez et al., 2009; Whittington et al., 1991).[76] Relying on the rational actor model, a willingness to pay is used by development scholars to justify policies like installing water meters. The narratives of Hindu Para residents certainly do not negate the idea that people are willing to pay for water (even if, they would prefer paying for municipal services rather than vending ones simply because the former end up being cheaper). However, closer attention to the accounts of Kavitha Aunty and Saima – who are among the worst affected by the state of water access in Hindu Para due to their financial and gendered positions within the community – suggests that purchasing this precious resource is more than just an economic transaction. Indeed, residents like Saima and Kavitha Aunty pay for water not only because they are willing to purchase this precious resource, but *also* because paying for vendor water in particular is the only way to lessen the uncertainty

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[76] For an important critique of this scholarship, see Ranganthan (2014).

they face in various other facets of their lives. Paying for vendor water ensures, for instance, that Saima can come home from work without having to worry about whether the municipal connection she is charged for monthly will produce water. For Kavitha Aunty, as for many others, paying for water means there is one less things to worry about amidst the scramble to pay rent on time, pay bills, and retain employment. Simply put, payment while not a choice made by rational actors (in the sense that there is no other way to access water reliably), is nevertheless a rationalized way to cope with everyday precarity.

Coping

There is no doubt that small-scale water vending is an exceedingly sub-par solution (temporary or otherwise) to Hindu Para's potable water shortages. Like in other developing contexts around the world, such vendors plug the gaps in Karachi's decrepit municipal water network, often working with formal institutions and state officials to do so. But small-scale vendors do not always benefit the poor as development practitioners often claim (see Ayalew et al., 2014; Casey et al., 2006; Ishaku et al., 2010; Onyenechere et al., 2012; Vasquez at al., 2009; Whittington et al., 1991). Instead, in communities where vending has largely replaced potable water supplies, such unregulated practices give rise to a host of poverty-inducing and health concerns (Altenburg and Drachenfels, 2006; Braimah et al., 2018; Constantine et al., 2017; Mitlin et al., 2019). Between these two developmental perspectives lie the lived experiences of Hindu Para's residents who venture out daily to meet their water needs. In the preceding sections, I have shed light on how purchasing vendor water – despite the financial and social burdens it entails – offers as a way to cope with precarity. As such, families' efforts to secure water reliably cannot be described as either engaging in everyday resistance on one hand or acquiescing

to uncertain living conditions on the other. Of course, in criticizing state officials, different ethnic groups, and even their neighbors, residents show a disinclination to accept the status quo – even if they don't actively mobilize to challenge it. But it is important not to overstate purchasing water – as a logical and purposeful response to "helping oneself" in such uncertainty – with a form of resistance. At the same time, while purchasing water certainly comes out of a lack of choice for many residents, it does not evidence indolence, apathy, or quiescence on the part of residents. Indeed, like Saima and Kavitha Aunty, many families in Hindu Para work hard to "make do" in a context replete with privation. In purchasing vendor water – often at considerable financial and social costs – residents neither act as subversive political actors nor dominated and powerless individuals. Instead, they are normal everyday residents engaged in efforts to produce livable spaces out of hardships beyond their control.

Conclusion

In Karachi's Samandar Colony, access to water has been rendered increasingly precarious over the space of three decades. With access through a patchwork of municipal pipes, government programs, and relational networks rendered, at best, uncertain, small-scale vendors have emerged as the only reliable way to procure water. As the experiences of everyday residents in an old part of the settlement known as Hindu Para show, these vending practices create extreme marginalization with households subjected to debt, disease and, ironically, a thirst for usable water. But, even though vendor water is dirty and expensive, residents continue purchasing it without instances of civil unrest. Indeed, families in Hindu Para have responded to the de-facto privatization of water in the settlement by treating vendors as a necessity. Their desire to help themselves ["apni madat āap"] and make do ["guzāra"] by purchasing vendor water sheds light on why residents, despite their dry pipes, do not turn to either collective mobilization on one

hand, or more violent expressions of their grievances such as rioting and intercommunal violence on the other. But as this chapter has argued, the explicit lack of protests, rioting, and general unrest in Samandar Colony signals neither everyday resistance nor quiescence. Instead, as residents in Hindu Para turn to purchasing vendor water, they actively seek to manage and cope with their onerous living conditions. Between the extremes of daily subversion or resignation, Hindu para's families find ways to occupy and, indeed, reproduce the city.

And yet, in their efforts to cope, Samandar Colony's residents do not relegate themselves to Karachi's social and political margins. In as much as purchasing vendor water entails a broader recognition of their everyday precarity, coping strategies signal how residents put formalized institutions to work for them when the time is right. In the fitful domain of Karachi's electoral politics when state officials, party workers, and middlemen cater to potential voters by promising improved municipal services – however briefly – residents' recognition of their constant deprivation becomes a way to frame claims for resources like water. Before, doing so, however, I first examine another key site of material practices which reproduce the city; it is to how officials of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board navigate the uncertain social, legal, and material terrain of Karachi to provide bulk water to Samandar Colony that I now turn.

FOUR

"OUR JOB IS TO INFORM"

Knowledge, Checking and the Politics of Engineering Neutrality

It was a sizzling day in June 2018 when I visited the field offices of Karachi's Defense Housing Authority (DHA) to inquire why my residence was not receiving piped water.[77] I was met with a deserted courtyard as I walked past the small, wrought iron gate into the walled compound of the field office. A tiny room crammed with desks, shelves and steel chairs in one corner of the courtyard was unoccupied, save for a rather tired-looking person who identified himself as a DHA official. The official responded to my inquiry about the lack of line water by gesturing absent-mindedly to a large white board labelled "WATER SUPPLY SCHEDULE – SUB-DIVISION II." He pointed to my street name and a date written in magic marker and told me I had received water earlier this week according to the schedule. "You will have to wait for next week now," he said, returning to his newspaper. When I explained that I had not received line water for weeks, despite what the schedule indicated, he responded: "The office is closed. You'll have to come back another time."

Over the next few days, I continued calling the DHA field office to request a house call from a maintenance official. Eventually, a DHA official named Rana showed up to

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[77] The Defense Housing Authority (DHA) is a collection of housing settlements in Karachi developed and managed by the Pakistan military. Originally meant as housing for military officers, DHA has since become home to many of Karachi's upper-middle class citizens. As a "planned area" (see chapter 2), DHA's housing settlements are laid out in neat grids with an underground network of water pipes to match. As a public body, the DHA is responsible for buying water in bulk from the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) and pumping it to DHA settlements.

check my piped connection. I watched from the shade as one of the laborers Rana had brought with him hacked away at the street in the hot sun. In what seemed like no time at all, the laborer used a pickaxe to dig a hole around three feet deep. He then proceeded to shovel loose sand out of the hole before finally using a hammer and chisel to clear debris around a black pipe no more than 8 inches in diameter. The pipe, which ran subterraneously parallel to the street, was connected perpendicularly to a much thinner white pipe via an "elbow" joint that curved up and towards the side so that the thinner pipe, in turn, ran across the street underground and into the subterranean tank in my home (figure 4.1). After unscrewing the elbow joint and checking both pipes, the laborer told me there was no obstruction. Frustrated, I asked Rana what would happen now. "Look," he replied, as the laborer shoveled sand back into the hole, "this is all underground, so we can't know for sure. If the problem isn't here it must be elsewhere. So, we'll have to make more holes to check." A few weeks later, Rana and his laborers found the obstruction. A tree root had grown through the point of contact between the secondary black pipe and a "T" joint further up the street. It took Rana and his laborers an additional two visits, during which time they made several more "checking holes" in different parts of the street, to identify the problem.

In Karachi, pumping schedules and supply quotas seek to render the city's water network calculable. These formalized technologies represent, in exceedingly precise terms, the temporal and spatial logic according to which water is pumped throughout a city of 20 million people. Yet, as my own experience trying to secure potable water demonstrates, schedules such as the one outside the DHA field office I visited in June 2018 operate in an idealized, even abstracted domain. They assume that Karachi's vast network of pipes can be easily pressurized by the turn of a valve or the switch of a pumping motor. In so doing, such formalized technologies elide the constant, material work of maintenance and repair that keeps the city's water flowing. Karachi's water

network thus entails a dichotomy in which precise quotas and pumping times exist alongside the everyday, often imprecise work of low-level officials like Rana. (After all, it took digging up several parts of the street for Rana and his laborer to identify and address my dry pipes). Yet, while such work is, by nature, imprecise in that it revolves around addressing vague, indistinct problems that afflict the city's infrastructure, it is equally important in rendering Karachi's opaque, underground water flows knowable. As officials like Rana travel the city to "check" pipes, valves, and elbow joints, they produce real-time, reliable information about Karachi's fickle waterscape in a way that remains uncaptured by pumping schedules and supply quotas hanging in government offices.[78]

In this chapter, I explore how Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) "machine operators" make the city's hydrologies more knowable.[79] Specifically, I focus on the work of machine operators at a pumping station outside Samandar Colony, a Karachi settlement at the very edge of the city's water network. Drawing on three months of participant observation, I document how these low-level state officials constantly produce and circulate information about such things as supply levels, shifting pumping schedules, and valve position in dealing with the settlement's water infrastructure.

I argue that the efforts of machine operators have political effects that far exceed the relative availability of water. As they carry out the banal tasks of maintenance and "checking", machine operators insulate themselves from the contentious, everyday politics of water access in Samandar Colony by performing the role of "neutral" state

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[78] Recent urban scholarship argues that city engineers are not vassals of state practice that reproduce the technical and privileged domains of official knowledge/power (Björkman and Harris, 2018). Instead, working in highly diverse and often intractable local environments, such figures mediate the contradictions that emerge between discourses of development on one hand, and the everyday complexities of navigating urban life on the other (Björkman, 2018; Hansen and Verkaaik, 2009).

[79] Machine operators are civil servants employed to the KWSB through the Government of Sindh. With an official rank of BS-06 (a low-level government pay grade), machine operators are posted across the city and work in shifts to manually switch pumping motors on and off, set valves, and monitor the water infrastructure. The goal of machine operators is to ensure different parts of the city are pressurized at specific times according to a schedule.

officials. By engaging in this politics of neutrality, Samandar Colony's machine operators enact a discursive and material distinction between the technical work of supplying water – of dealing with valve positions and motor pressures – and the constantly negotiated process through which the settlement's residents divvy up bulk water supplies amongst themselves. As described by a machine operator I spoke to in June 2018, "Our job is to inform; the politics is up to them." In so doing, machine operators reproduce the materialities and subjectivities of a bulk supply system where maintenance goes hand in hand with hydraulic uncertainty.

Figure 4. 1: Elbow joint connecting houses to the supply system (photo by author)

This chapter begins with an overview of Samandar Colony's bulk water supply system. Charting how the settlement's single pumping station receives water and sends it onward, I document the material and social uncertainty which structure Samandar Colony's extended hydrology. In such circumstances, information about things such as pumping times and locations, supply levels, pressures and valve positions integral to facilitating water access in material terms. The subsequent section therefore turns ethnographic attention to the practices of Samandar Colony's machine operators. Specifically, I describe the "checking" practices through which machine operators produce and circulate information about the settlement's water flows. In the concluding sections of this chapter, I demonstrate both how machine operators use specific discourses and practices around this information to perform the role of "neutral" public officials, and how such a politics of neutrality reproduces the hydraulic status quo in Samandar Colony.

Shifting Schedules

Karachi does not run on a 24/7 supply network where the city's pipes are constantly pressurized. Instead, water is pumped on a staggered schedule to different parts of the city at distinct days and times. This turn-based system is facilitated by an infrastructure that includes miles of water pipes, hundreds of inconspicuous valves that are manually operated to direct the flow of water, and over 150 pumping stations at various points in the city. "Samandar Station" is one such station which supplies Samandar Colony with water. Operationalized in 2013 under the auspices of the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Samandar Station was built with an 80,000-gallon underground tank and two powerful pumping motors to facilitate the needs of Samandar Colony's residents that

easily number in the hundreds of thousands.[80] Samandar Station is supplied water by "Basin Station", another pumping node located about a mile and a half from Samandar Colony, via a 24-inch mainline (figure 4.2). But Basin Station is not Samandar Colony's only source of water. Samandar Station is also attached to a reverse osmosis (RO) plant operated by Pak Oasis, a privately-owned company. The plant, which collects and desalinates underground water before depositing it in Samandar Station's tank, is one of many across the city.[81] Samandar Station thus serves as a pumping node where water can be collected from two distinct sources before being pumped to households in the settlement via 12-inch water pipes (see figure 4.3).
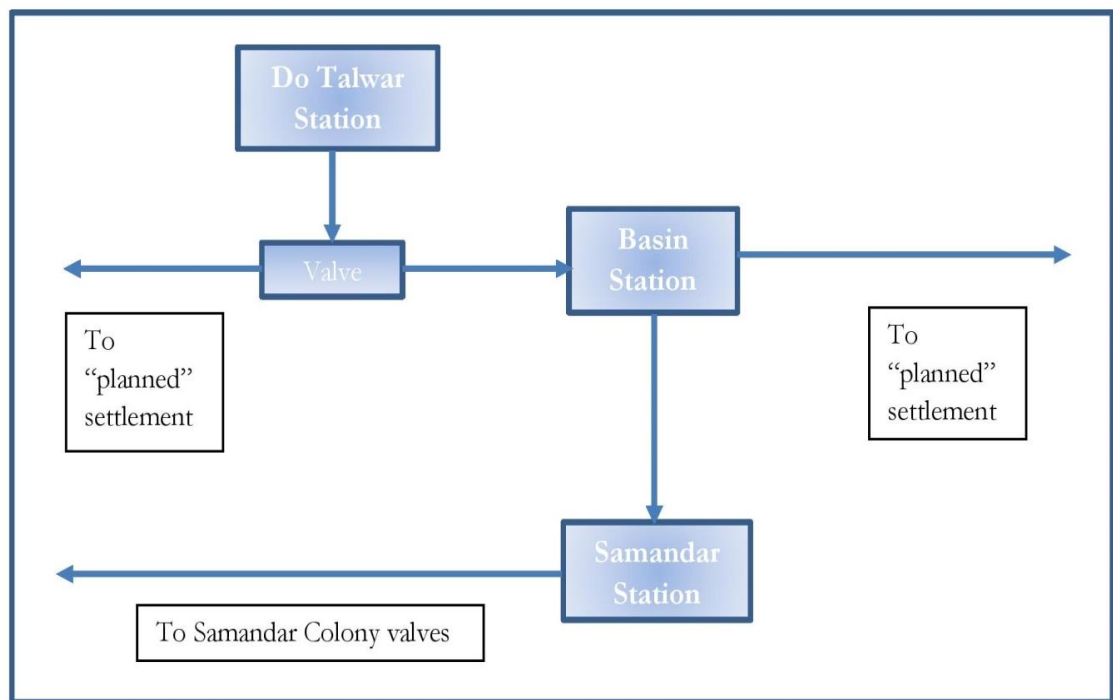
Figure 4.2: Samandar Colony bulk water supply system (diagram by author)

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[80] As I discuss in chapter 3, Samandar Colony's water infrastructure is intertwined with electoral politics in the settlement. Lines have largely been laid by political parties looking for vote banks. The construction of Samandar Station is another example of how the desire to secure votes has shaped the settlement's water infrastructure.

[81] Reverse osmosis plants are part of an initiative started by the PPP-led Government of Sindh in 2013. This initiative, which is carried out by the private sector through companies like Pak Oasis, is meant to supplement the water supplied by the KWSB.

I saw how this infrastructure functioned up-close when Rahul, a KWSB machine operator posted to Samandar Station, invited me to visit. One of my goals during my first few weeks of fieldwork in June 2018 was to learn how much water Samandar Station received and pumped onward given reports of city-wide shortages. I therefore focused on mapping out the days and times when water from Basin Station was due to be pumped to Samandar Station according to a supply schedule mandated by the KWSB. After studying station log books and extensive conversations with water operators at Basin and Samandar stations, I slowly began to grasp the fortnightly schedule. As table 4.1 shows, water is due to be pumped from Basin Station at distinct times every day over a schedule that runs the course of thirteen days. There is no water on day 14 (Monday), and the schedule is then reset to day 1 (Tuesday). Water is due to be pumped from Basin Station to Samandar Station five times at 1pm, 3pm, 9pm, 12am, and 3am over each 24-hour period for the two-week cycle. This creates a biweekly schedule where Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays are due to receive water at 1pm, 3pm, and 9pm and Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays are due to receive water at 12 am and 3am the first week, and vice versa the following week. There is one important caveat in this schedule. Because Karachi's water network is turned off for 24 hours between 6pm on Sunday and 6pm on Monday, water is not due to be pumped to Samandar Station from Basin Station after 3pm on Sunday until 9pm the following Monday at the end of the first week.

But, after carefully mapping this hard-won information, I found that the official schedule simply served as a rough framework for pumping times. For instance, table 4.2 below depicts a two-week, representative sample of a three month period during which I recorded the times at which Samandar Station received water from Basin Station (black cells indicate days and times water is meant to be pumped but isn't). As the figure shows, Samandar Station received water an average of three times over a 24-hour period rather

than the five times expected by the schedule; once between 4pm and 6pm, once again at 8:45pm, and then at 2:45am the same night.
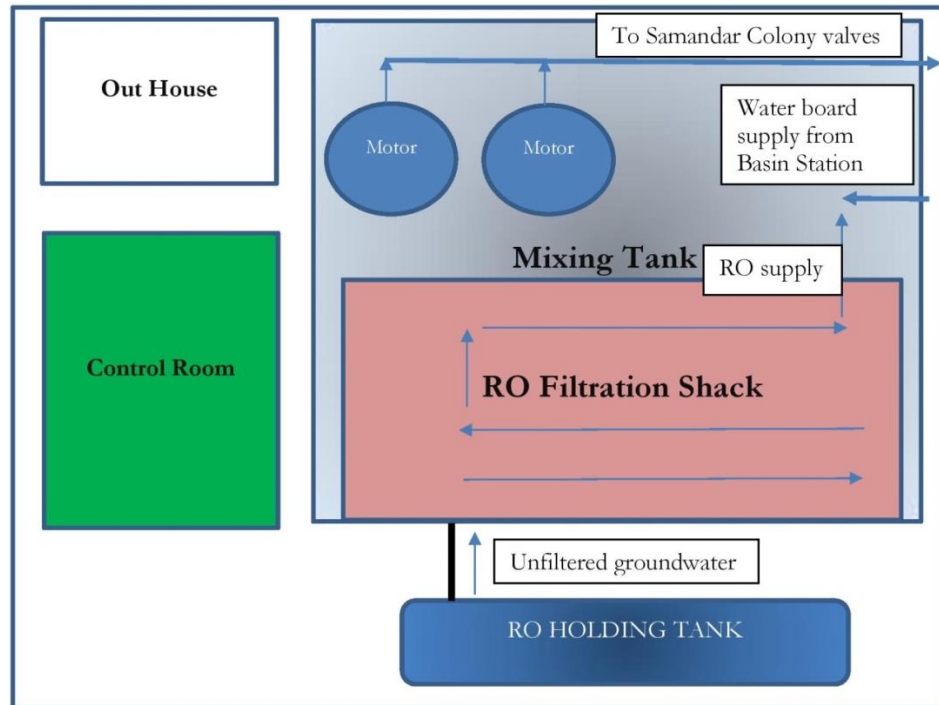

Figure 4.3: Samandar Station layout (diagram by author)

In addition to charting the days and times water was scheduled to arrive, I also focused on measuring the amount of water pumped into Samandar Station's tank every day. But, in the absence of water meters, I had to familiarize myself with a practice that is best described as "counting stairs." This involved physically checking Samandar Station's tank to observe how many "stairs" – a series of metal poles forming a sort of right-angle triangle shape at one of the tank's corners – were visible. With the tank's capacity at 80,000 gallons and a total of nine stairs, each stair accounts for roughly 9,000 gallons of water. Each pumping time raised the water level by roughly 2.5 stairs (22,500 gallons).[82]

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[82] Though it may seem meager given Samandar Station's 80,000-gallon capacity, water operators considered 2.5 stairs "good water" in the sense that it was enough to supply a majority of homes in the settlement. Though, what constituted a majority of homes was far more difficult to quantify.

Given that water was pumped three times on average from Basin Station over 24 hours, Samandar Station received a daily supply of roughly 63,000 gallons. This made the RO plant, which deposited roughly 15,000 gallons of desalinated water in Samandar Station's tank daily, an important supplementary supply source. With these sources combines, Samandar Station thus received about 82,500 gallons over a representative 24-hour period. This was far less than the 127,500 gallons (including RO water) expected if water was pumped five times a day as per the official schedule (table 4.2).

Days/Hours	12am	3am	1pm	3pm	9pm
Tuesday			✓	✓	✓
Wednesday	✓	✓			
Thursday			✓	✓	✓
Friday	✓	✓			
Saturday			✓	✓	✓
Sunday	✓	✓			
Monday	City-wide shutdown				✓
Tuesday	✓	✓			
Wednesday			✓	✓	✓
Thursday	✓	✓			
Friday			✓	✓	✓
Saturday	✓	✓			
Sunday					
Monday	City-wide shutdown				

Table 4.1: Scheduled pumping times from Basin Station to Samandar Station

Machine operators working at Samandar Station and Basin Station explained this lack of water in terms of city-wide shortages. For instance, when I asked Hunr, an operator posted to Basin Station, why water was not pumped to Samandar Station at 1pm and 12am as per the KWSB schedule, he explained that Basin Station itself was subjected to

shortages. "All we can do is send whatever water we get on (to Samandar Station)" he said. Yet, Hunr's claim that Samandar Colony, like the rest of Karachi, was in the throes of a city-wide shortage, failed to explain instances where Samandar Station received spectacularly large amounts of water. Indeed, there were a few occasions during my three months at Samandar Station where water pumped from Basin Station caused the Samandar tank to overflow its 80,000 gallon capacity. On one occasion, Rahul and I were enjoying the cool evening while waiting for the scheduled 8:45pm supply from Basin Station when a sudden, gurgling sound was followed by water bubbling up through the tank cover and quickly sweeping the concrete floor. Quick as a flash, Rahul ran to the pump's control room to switch on the dual motors and pump the water onward so that the supply arriving in the tank did not continue to overflow. When I asked Rahul why the water had overflowed, he simply shrugged: "Must be a mistake," he said.

Days/Hours	12am	2:45am	1pm	4pm – 6pm	8:45pm
Tuesday			■	✓	✓
Wednesday	■	✓			
Thursday			■	✓	✓
Friday	■	✓			
Saturday			■	✓	✓
Sunday	■	✓			▨
Monday	▨	▨	▨	▨	✓
Tuesday	■	✓			
Wednesday			■	✓	✓
Thursday	■	✓			
Friday			■	✓	✓
Saturday	■	✓			
Sunday					▨
Monday	▨	▨	▨	▨	

Table 4.2: Recorded pumping times from Basin Station to Samandar Station

This "mistake" was repeated on other instances as well. On another occasion, the absence of a machine operator at Samandar Station meant the overflow could not be stopped. The incident occurred when the water was pumped from Basin Station at 4:30pm. Khan, the water operator who worked afternoons at Samandar Station had a habit of leaving before his shift was over. It just so happened that Khan was nowhere to be found when thousands of gallons of water unexpectedly arrived at Samandar Station in the middle of the afternoon. The tank would overflow and inundate the entire surrounding compound in 6 inches of water before city officials and residents realized what was going on.

In short, while machine operators often spoke of shortages, it was clear from instances such as these that Samandar Colony's bulk water supply could vary dramatically. But not all machine operators pointed to shortages to explain Samandar Colony's (usual) lack of bulk water. On a visit to Basin Station, for instance, I met a machine operator named Jamshed who claimed that party workers from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) would routinely seek to hide the amount of water available for Samandar Colony. Jamshed explained that water to Basin Station was controlled via a small valve further up the road that had to be set manually to direct the flow of water (figure 4.2). "The entire problem starts there," Jamshed said nervously, referring to the water supplied to Samandar Station. The water operator then showed me two small pipes connected to Basin Station's pumping motors. One of the pipes carried water to Samandar Colony and the other to a neighboring "planned district" also served by Basin Station. Jamshed explained that a person affiliated with the MQM named Zulfi, who was also in charge of the planned area's pumping station, often told him to tell Samandar Colony residents that the valve controlling water to Basin Station was open when it was, in fact, closed. In this way, water meant for Samandar Colony could be secretly collected at Basin Station before being pumped to Zulfi's planned area. If asked, Jamshed would

claim the valve was open but there was no water at Basin station; thereby explaining the lack of water in terms of a "shortage" beyond his control.

As these fieldwork experiences show, the flow of water between Basin Station and Samandar Station is marked by both material and social uncertainty. Indeed, even the common trope of shortages cannot explain the unpredictability through which Samandar Station receives water. Neither official schedules, nor carefully calculated, real-time schemas (such as the one I created) thus fully account for the excesses and shortages in bulk supply experienced at Samandar Station. Whether because of city-wide water shortages, the trickery of a few machine operators, "mistakes" in pumping practices, or a combination of these factors, the supply from Basin Station, though not unpredictable, remains largely incalculable. Below, I describe how this uncertainty is further compounded by the actions of local leaders and representatives as Samandar Station's bulk water supplies are pumped onwards to different parts of the settlement.

Negotiated Schedules

Like the rest of the city, Samandar Colony too is supplied water through a staggered system. In terms of physical water infrastructure, this means Samandar Colony is split into three pumping zones (figure 4.4 below). Each zone has its own 12-inch piped connection to Samandar Station which is pressurized by exit valves controlling the flow of water. Every other day, water is first collected at Samandar Station throughout the day (from both Basin Station and the RO plant) before being pumped to a single pumping zone at 9pm. Between 9am and 3am, water operators wait for the 2:45am supply before changing the valves and pumping the water to a different pumping zone at 3am. Water is therefore pumped to two of the three pumping zones at 9pm and 3am respectively, every other day. Because the water is pumped only twice over the course of a 48-hour period,

only two of the three pumping zones receive water on any given pumping day. Precisely which two of the three pumping zones receive water on a given day is subject to constant negotiations between Samandar Colony's residents themselves.
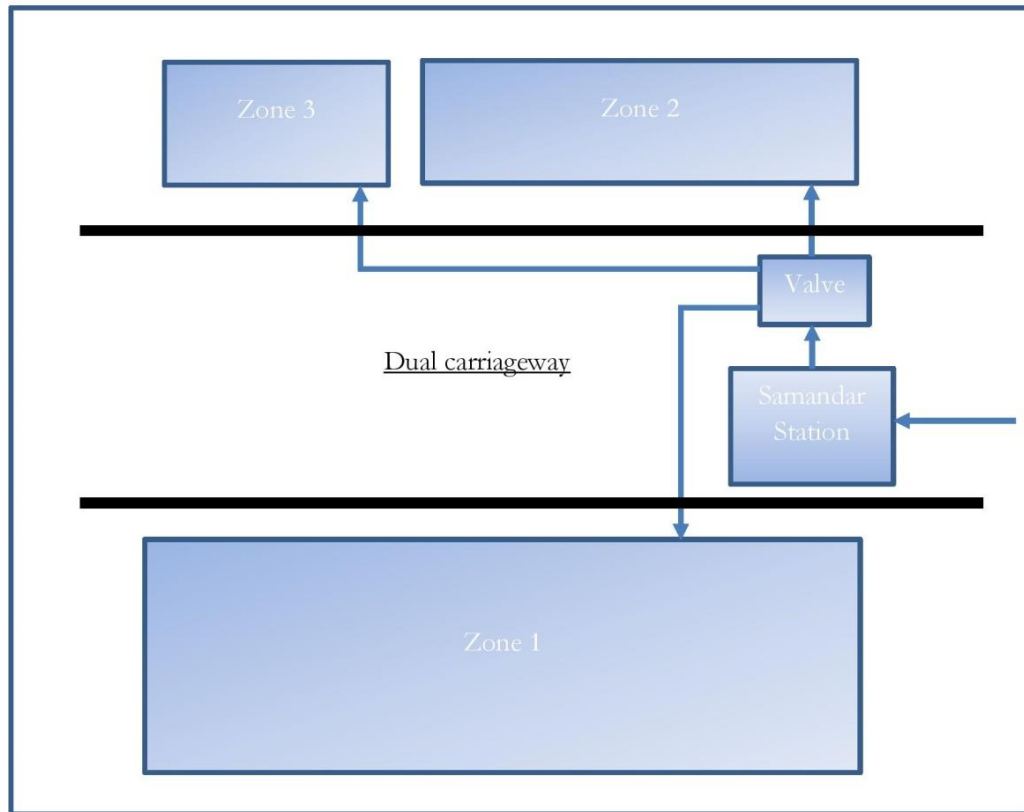

Figure 4.4: Layout of bulk water supply Samandar Colony (diagram by author)

Specifically, water is divvied up between the three pumping zones according to what residents of Samandar Colony call a "*wari*" [turn] based system. Under the *wari* system, community leaders – and in particular the settlement's councilors and local elders – representing each of the three zones negotiate pumping turns amongst themselves.[83] It is these negotiations, rather than a fixed pumping schedule, that determine the geographic dimension according to which Samandar Colony's households receive water. Table 4.3 below, based on a sample of fieldwork recordings over a three-month period, documents

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[83] Hansen and Stepputat (2006: 297) usefully describe such actors as "informal sovereignties" that do not derive their authority from legal provisions or ideas about legitimate rule, but through performances of power and influence – such as over the settlement's water infrastructure.

changes in this geographic dimension by charting the distribution of water between Samandar Colony's three pumping zones over a two-week period.

Pumping Day	Pumping Time	Pumping Zone
Tuesday	9pm	1
Wednesday	3am	2
Thursday	9pm	2
Friday	3am	1
Saturday	9pm	1
Sunday	3am	2
Monday	9pm	2
Tuesday	3am	1
Wednesday	9pm	1
Thursday	3am	2
Friday	9pm	3
Saturday	3am	1
Sunday	9pm	2

Table 4.3: Distribution of water to specific pumping zones in Samandar Colony

At first glance the *wari* system seems like an example of community-based organizing and problem solving in a context where reliable access to water is a city-wide problem. Certainly, the daily operation of Karachi's water network is dogged by multiple problems. For instance, an assessment carried out by independent consultants Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA and KWSB, 2008: S1-1) found that "over the last three decades, the augmentation of the water supply system including water source, bulk conveyance system and distribution network has consistently lagged behind the fast growing water demand of the city." In a 700-page report, JICA and the KWSB found that Karachi's water supply was plagued by leaks and theft, and that the publicly-owned

water board was a financially unsustainable institution. Additionally, a 2017 study on water quality commissioned by the Pakistani Supreme Court found that up to 90% of Karachi's water was unfit for human consumption due to fecal contamination (Justice Kalhoro, 2017). Two widely cited investigative media reports, meanwhile, allege that a shadowy "tanker mafia" does a roaring business as municipal pipes deliver air instead of water (Ahmed and Kaleem, 2014; Maher and Ilyas, 2016). Karachi's demand of 1,1000 million gallons/day (MGD) is thus allegedly watered by a meagre 550MGD. In such circumstance, the *wari* system can be seen as a bulwark against city-wide hydraulic uncertainty. Its localized turn-based supply logic marshals both community relationships and a creative material setup (figure 4.5) to distribute water equally in Samandar Colony. During my time at Samandar Station, however, I found that the *wari* system, while certainly a useful way to water the settlement, often created its own irregularities in supply. Indeed, because it was open to constant negotiation and contestation between community leaders and residents, the *wari* system rendered Samandar Colony's turn-based supply system at best fluid and at worst deeply unreliable. This can be seen in how Samandar Colony's present hydraulic landscape came to be.

Prior to 2017, Samandar Colony was split into two pumping zones, each on either side of the dual carriageway that runs the length of the settlement (figure 4.6). Each side of the road was served by its own 12-inch line which was pressurized on alternate days by manipulating Samandar Station's exit valves. Rahul once explained to me the water would have to be pumped for at least forty minutes, with water simultaneously being pumped into an already-full tank at Samandar Station, for the pipe to remain pressurized through to the houses at the very end of each pumping zone. But in the summer of 2017, when the RO plant was once again malfunctioning and the supply from Basin Station was short, it took Samandar Station's powerful water motors only twenty minutes to empty its half-full tank. Consequently, houses situated upstream of each 12-inch line, and

123

hence closer to the pumping station, monopolized the "water-time", leaving those living downstream with dry pipes. In response, Salman, an old PPP stalwart and Samandar Colony councilor, constructed an independent connection to Samandar Station. Salman hired laborers and heavy machinery to dig up the street and lay an independent 12-inch line pipe that bypassed several hundred yards of upstream houses to create an independent, third pumping zone. When I asked KWSB machine operators if this connection involved the water board, they responded by telling me the water board had no business in Samandar Colony. Instead, Rahul described Salman's act as "*jiski lathi uski bhens*" (the person with the stick controls the buffalo). In other words, Rahul indicated that Salman's considerable political clout due to his connections to the PPP, not to mention his access to party funds, is what allowed him to alter Samandar Colony's hydraulic landscape.

As this example demonstrates, negotiated schedules are a fixture of Samandar Station's times. Indeed, negotiations between local leaders have, in the past, altered the very nature of Samandar Colony's water network and continue to determine how the settlement's bulk supplies are distributed among its residents. As such, much like the supply from Basin Station to Samandar Station, the supply from the latter onward to various parts of the settlement is also characterized by uncertainty. This uncertainty not only comes from the unpredictability in the bulk water supply available at Samandar Station at any given time and day, but also by a turn-based or "*wari*" supply system which is constantly altered, reshaped, and otherwise negotiated between local leaders speaking for different parts of the settlement. As I argue below, in such a context of uncertainty, knowledge about Samandar Colony's shifting water flows becomes critical for everyday access at the household level. The machine operators that produce this information, in turn, become uniquely situated political actors.

Informed Access

> We get calls or messages about when the water will come; whether it will come in the afternoon or the evening or late at night. Sometimes, even if we get the message, the water doesn't come. We have taken a smaller pipe connection from the main line, so there is more pressure. But the man from the water board [still must] call or message us to tell us when the water comes.

> - Imad, Samandar Colony resident

Studying how access to water is secured in Mumbai despite the socially and physically opaque nature of the city's water infrastructure, Lisa Björkman describes how residents must "keep up with the city" (Björkman, 2015: 157). Specifically, Mumbai's residents are constantly on the look-out for scraps of information, produced and verified through emerging relationships with state officials and ordinary urban citizens that help make the city more transparent. In Samandar Colony, too, hydraulic uncertainty is a fixture of everyday life. Much like Mumbaikars must secure information to render the city's shifting social and material hydrologies more legible, Samandar Colony's residents must also constantly seek out knowledge about pumping times, valve positions, and shifting schedules to secure water.[84] To demonstrate this, it is useful to briefly describe how households in Samandar Colony access water.

Once water is collected at Samandar Station, two powerful pumping motors carry the supply onward to a specific pumping zone through one of three dedicated 12-inch mainlines. In turn, these mainlines feed secondary pipes between 6 to 8 inches in diameter that are perpendicularly attached to the mainline in series and carry the water into smaller areas of each pumping zone. Finally, these secondary pipes feed tertiary

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[84] I draw here on recent scholarship which highlights the importance of everyday, un-institutionalized local knowledge in navigating urban life. For instance, Anjaria and Anjaria (2013: 55) write that there exists an "alternative domain of knowledge outside of the formal domain of the state." These alternative epistemologies are gained through lived experiences rather than official sources of information produced and curated by state institutions (McFarlane, 2011). Such knowledge, moreover, is crucial to how residents "navigate" urban contexts structured by economic dispossession, social fragmentation and violence (Anjaria and McFarlane, 2011).

pipes between 1 to 4 inches in diameter which carry the water directly into people's homes. When the mainline is pressurized, households located closer to the pump in any given pumping zone are the first to receive water. Households further away must wait until the water travels the distance to their homes. How far the water travels in a given pumping zone depends on both how much water Basin Station supplies to Samandar Station and how much water is already present in the latter's tank. With so many households (and connections) drawing from a single mainline, many families in each of the three pumping zones resort to using manually operated motors to siphon water with pressure from their individual connections. In turn, this raises monthly electricity bills. Thus, accessing water involves a delicate balance between minimizing the electricity cost of running a motor and securing good water pressure to maximize how much can be drawn during the given "water time", or the amount of time one's tertiary pipe is pressurized. Because this water time can last anywhere between 5 and 20 minutes depending on Samandar Station's bulk supplies and how far downstream an area, street or household is from the mainline (connections further downstream are pressurized for shorter periods of time), securing line water requires constant vigilance.

In turn, having information about the settlement's supply levels and timings, along with knowledge of which pumping zone will receive water, becomes crucial to access. For instance, the difference in learning whether the tank at Samandar Station is full or half-full determines whether a resident can expect water given how far they live from the pumping station with houses further away likely to receive water only if the tank is over three quarters full. Reliable information also signals if a given day's supply will *not* be enough if there isn't enough water at Samandar Station to be pumped throughout the settlement. In such circumstances, rather than taking the risk of waiting for the next pumping day and hoping there is enough water to do such household chores as cooking, cleaning and bathing, residents make other arrangements such as purchasing water from

small-scale vendors. With little consistency or regularity in supply, this information allows residents to determine how much water they will receive on a given pumping day and whether alternative arrangements need to be made if the water board supply is inadequate. Moreover, reliably learning what time and day a pumping zone will receive water directly affects a household's ability to effectively plan around pumping times. Accessing water is an inherently physical task with motors needing to be switched on manually and storage containers cleaned and at the ready at pumping times. Thus, households need to have an able family member present at home to carry out these tasks.

In short, obtaining information about the settlement's water supply is essential in determining how access is achieved for residents of Samandar Colony. In conditions of such hydraulic uncertainty there is a premium on the daily urban knowledge that facilitates material practices of access. Information about water flows is not known in advance. Nor is it always consistent. Instead, it is based on speculation informed by previous experience and must be verified daily. But, because it makes otherwise opaque, shifting supply levels and pumping times more knowable, information about the settlement's water supply becomes a sort of currency in conversations about water. Thus, every day, residents of Samandar Colony call water operators with questions like "how much water is there today?" and "which zone will receive water today?" and "when will the water be pumped?" Residents also often visit the station itself to speak to water operators or confirm answers to these questions themselves. Securing this information is part and parcel of daily practices of access in Samandar Colony.

In such circumstances, machine operators play an important role by producing and sharing information about the settlement's water levels, timings, and schedules. The following section documents the practices through which machine operators produce this information and, in doing so, become uniquely situated political actors.

"Checking"

A set of routinized checking practices structure each pumping day at Samandar Colony. Working closely with officials at Basin Station and Samandar Colony's local leaders, three machine operators man the station every other day in an afternoon, evening, and later night (early morning) shift. Shifts begin in the afternoon on days where the water is pumped at 9pm, ending in the wee hours of the following morning when the water is pumped at 3am. Each pumping day thus begins with an operator named Khan visiting the pump around 3pm to check and set the exit valves in the correct position for the zone scheduled to receive water at 9pm. Water then arrives from Basin Station sometime between 4pm and 6pm. At 8:30pm, Rahul, the water operator on duty, calls Khan to confirm the valves are in the correct position. He then calls the operator at Basin Station to confirm that there are no supply problems and that the water will be pumped to Samandar Station at 8:45pm. When the supply from Basin Station arrives, Rahul promptly pumps the water to the designated zone at 9pm. Later that night (early morning the next day) Manzoor, a third operator, visits the pump around 2:30am to adjust the valves for the 3am schedule. He too calls the operator at Basin Station to ensure there is an appropriate level of supply before pumping the water on to the designated zone.

Given that breakdowns, acute shortages, surpluses, and changes in pumping schedules are constant, machine operators also regularly visit Samandar Station themselves or deputize residents to check how much water has accumulated throughout the day. Ascertaining the water level, in turn, is itself a unique checking practice. As mentioned above, in the absence of bulk water meters at city pumping stations (that might anyway be tampered with according to some city officials), machine operators determine supply levels by counting the number of submerged tank stairs. Checking thus involves physically removing the tank's cover and counting the unsubmerged stairs, while trying

to determine how many submerged stairs are accounted for by the water board supply and how many stairs are accounted for by the supplementary RO supply.

But no matter how well-scripted a pumping day is none of these practices produce water unless the infrastructure at Samandar Station is working effectively. Hence, water operators have several checking practices that revolve around the station's powerful pumping motors. For instance, operators routinely check to ensure the two water motors are making adequate pressure. Rather than using dedicated tools that can measure pressure in terms of pounds per square inch, operators rely on experience and situated knowledge. Thus, if pushing a small exit port on each motor while it is running shoots water high into the air, makes a high-pitched sound, and drenches the surrounding area, the water operators knows from experience that the motor is making enough pressure to pump the water deep into a given pumping zone. Alternatively, if the water emerges as a fat, short fountain and makes a low-pitched gurgling sound, the motor is sucking too much air. On occasions where pressure is considered inadequate, operators climb down into the hot, dark tank to physically inspect the vacuum plates on the underside of each motor for lodged debris. The motors are also used to identify potential points where water mixes with sewage. If, for instance, a resident calls Rahul to complain that the water smells, a small amount of water is pumped into a bucket by attaching a plastic pipe to a motor's valve. This water is then visually inspected for fecal matter or smelled for contamination. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the routinized checking practices described here. As Rahul said when I asked him what would happen if one of the motors failed completely for some reason; "then Usmaan Bhai, there would be a big problem." But, while these checking practices are necessary to making water flow to Samandar Colony, they are often not sufficient. In other words, the discovery of such problems as leaks or inadequate pressures does not guarantee the maintenance or repair required to fix them.

This was made clear to me late in my fieldwork when a routine exit port check led Rahul to discover that one of Samandar Station's prized motors was not making enough pressure. Initially assuming debris from the tank was keeping the motor's vacuum plate open, Rahul climbed down into the tank only to discover the plate was, in fact, sealing properly. The problem was therefore likely internal, perhaps a worn rubber seal Rahul suggested. After narrowing down the problem, the machine operator informed his superior and requested a maintenance crew. But no repairmen arrived to pry open the motor and replace a failed component over the next few weeks. This was despite the fact that the underperforming motor had reduced pressure throughout the system, thus impacting the supply for households located further away from Samandar Station. Indeed, in my final few weeks of fieldwork, Rahul received several angry calls about the lack of pressure. What, then, did Rahul's checking accomplish if the motor was not repaired?

Put simply, Rahul gained reliable, up to date information about Samandar Station's pumping capabilities. When concerned residents asked the machine operator why they were receiving water with lower pressure over the next few days, Rahul informed them that one of the motors was working at a lower capacity and was quick to add the relevant authorities had been informed of the situation. Despite being unable to solve the problem of lower pressure in material terms, which also depended on the cooperation of other water board officials, Rahul's ability to nevertheless explain why the problem existed and where the solution lay points to the important by-product produced by the maintenance work of water operators. Working amidst breakdowns, leakages and shifting schedules, machine operators like Rahul thus constantly produced reliable, real-time information about Samandar Colony's water supplies.

In his rich ethnography of Mumbai's waterscapes, Nikhil Anand (2017) dispels the notion that city officials' daily practices of infrastructural maintenance are simply

apolitical, technical urban exercises. Instead, by actively enacting or withholding such maintenance in different parts of Mumbai, city officials also reproduce larger political discourses that describe Hindu urban dwellers as clean, legal citizens and their Muslim counterparts as dirty, illegal migrants.[85] Anand thus emphasizes how maintenance affects the politics of Mumbai as a whole. In Samandar Colony, too, amidst breakdowns, leakages, and shifting schedules, the "checking" practices of machine operators have political implications that far exceed the relative availability of water. Below, I describe how machine operators constantly produce and share information about the settlement's bulk water supplies to perform the role of "neutral" public officials.

"Valve Politics" and Neutral Hydrologies

One afternoon during a fieldwork trip in 2017, I found myself chatting with residents of Samandar Colony. I had initially set up an interview with a local councilor named Ameer through a community leader named Ilam. What started out as a one on one interview, however, turned into a sort of community meeting as Ilam made a few phone calls. Soon, Ameer's tiny office was packed with other community leaders and residents. Hot tea was brought in, along with cold drinks, extra chairs and snacks. Before I knew it, I was a fly on the wall, not so much interviewing a local councilor, but listening in on an enthusiastic conversation between several men – all of whom were speaking at once it seemed. Pasha Sahib, a local leader who identified himself as a PPP loyalist, was seemingly the ringleader given that he was seated behind Ameer's massive desk with

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[85] Recent urban scholarship has also shed light on the important political work done *through* everyday maintenance and repair (see Dominguez Rubio, 2016; Graham and Thrift, 2007; Jackson, 2014). Here, maintenance and repair extend beyond physically clearing water pipes of obstructions or finding leaks. Instead, as Idalina Baptista (2018: 6) argues, these practices have "social and political dimensions" as well such that infrastructures are constantly "produced and reproduced, materially and symbolically, and sustained over time."

everyone else on plastic chairs around him. Everyone nodded vigorously as Pasha Sahib angrily criticized the settlement's water supply situation:

> There is no water. We don't get water. Whoever has *note* [money] buys water, the poor get killed. They don't give us water from the back. Even if they do, the thieves that are sitting here sell it off. Who are these people, you ask? Who do you think? Our area's MPAs [members of parliament] and MNAs [members of national assembly], Nazims [union council chairman] and Naib Nazims [union council vice-chairman] do this… If people only look to line their pockets, then what can we do? These are those people that are killing us! How can you live without water?

I was not surprised by Pasha Sahib's comments given media reports that described corruption and mismanagement as a pervasive feature of Karachi's water supply (see Ahmed and Kaleem, 2014; Kamal, 2009). Pasha Sahib's sentiments, which were echoed in many of the interviews I conducted with residents of Samandar Colony, expressed dissatisfaction with how the settlement's bulk water supplies were distributed between the three pumping zones. For instance, Pasha Sahib argued that zone 2 (his zone) had a larger population and thus required water more often than zone 1. "They should look at how many people live here when they send the water elsewhere!" he grumbled, referring to the local leaders that determined pumping schedules in the *wari* system. But Pasha Sahib's went further than calling out an unequal distribution system. Instead, he described the *wari* system as facilitating theft, corruption, and ""valve politics" (*valve ki siyasat*) – where certain pumping zones in the settlement received more than their fair share of bulk water. He, like his companions, focused their ire on zone 1 which they saw as receiving water more often than zones 2 and 3 because a union council vice chairman drew his political support from families that lived therein.

In general, for residents who had no clout of their own and no ethnic, political or kinship connections with influential councilors, party cadres and local big men, narratives of "valve politics" are powerful ways to make sense of Samandar Colony's dry pipes. I describe them here, not to attest to their veracity, but to more broadly shed light on the

deeply politicized context in which machine operators work daily. It is precisely in circumstances where accusations of theft are common parlance that Samandar Station's machine operators, who are also routinely accused of taking part in valve-politics as part of the *wari* system ("they control the valves how they want", as Pasha Sahib would say), strive to present themselves as neutral state officials. Rahul's description of his initial experiences working as a machine operator is instructive in this regard:

> I'm an MQM [Muttahida Qaumi Movement party] man. People [in the area] raised a hue and cry when I was appointed here [to SPS]. They assumed I would distribute water to only a few [party] people. But I explained that, even though I was an MQM supporter, I was at the pumping station through the water board as a *numainda* [representative]. In that capacity, I will give water to everyone because it's my duty as a water board employee. Since then, people have calmed down.

Manzoor, a second water operator, echoed Rahul's comments.

> If [an influential person] makes a phone call, there can be water here. This is because there is enough water. But the distribution is the problem. Maybe in posh areas the situation is better. But here, in *katcha* [informal] areas, water comes on politics. My job is to check and pump the water at 3am. They [local leaders, councilors, party cadres] do this *valve siyasat* [valve politics], but we do our work.

Samandar Colony's water operators recognize their own lack of authority over the distribution of water in the settlement. At the same time, they also claim that "politics" has nothing to do with the work they do as public officials in Samandar Colony. Instead they, as Rahul claims, see themselves as neutral "representatives" that carry out the work of providing the settlement with water. But, with no control over the city's bulk supply, limited resources to repair unreliable infrastructures and little authority over the *wari* system at Samandar Station, water operators cannot enact this claim by "[giving] water to everyone" as Rahul suggests. Instead, water operators claim to do their job by sharing the information they produce about the settlement's water supplies.

> I let people know about the [water] situation when they ask. It's not my *zimidari* [duty] to answer the phone. My *zimidari* [duty] is only to make sure the water is turned on at the right time and that the exit valve is in the correct position. But when I first started working at [Samandar Station] about five years ago, my number was distributed to everyone [in the settlement]. Now it is my *kaam* [work] to answer the phone and tell people what they wanted to know. Some

people are rude, but there is no reason to stop giving information to everyone for the sake of a few uncouth callers. *Our job is to inform…* the *siyasat* [politics] is up to them [Samandar Colony residents] … (emphasis added).

Rahul's description of his responsibilities shows that sharing information about the settlement's water supplies is the only possible way to claim neutrality in a context where access is constantly punctuated by social and material uncertainties beyond any single group's control.[86] But, in claiming and enacting this impartiality, it is inaccurate to say machine operators like Rahul subscribe to an idealized notion of public duty in a sea of corruption and malpractice. Rather, these public officials engage in neutral *performances* aimed at distancing themselves from the discourses of corruption, patronage and theft that frame water access in Samandar Colony. Machine operators understand that sharing extremely valuable information about various aspects of Samandar Colony's daily water flows allows them to make a place for themselves as public officials amidst haunting discourses of valve politics. Below, I relate two ethnographic encounters in which Samandar Station's pumping schedule experienced "interruptions" which demonstrate precisely this politics of neutrality in action.[87] In the first instance, a malfunctioning RO plant led to an extended renegotiation of the *wari* system. In the second, a careless machine operator at Basin Station, who routinely failed to pump the water on time, created the possibility of a severe shortage. In showing how they responded very differently to these circumstances, the encounters below demonstrate how self-professed neutral machine operators enact a distinction between the political – or "*siyasi*" – process

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[86] Infrastructures have been theorized in many ways. Here, I draw attention to Anand's ((2017: 13) claim that infrastructures are social and material "accretions" that evade the complete control of any single actor or group of actors.

[87] Disturbances to otherwise constant flows of things like water and electricity can be momentary and easily fixable, or catastrophic malfunctions that require expertise, effort and the cooperation of human and non-human forces to remedy. Both reveal machinations otherwise invisible when infrastructures are functioning as they are expected to (Larkin, 2013; Mitchell, 2014). For instance, in her work *Vibrant Matter* (2010) Jane Bennett analyzes the 2003 Northeast blackout in the United States. Bennett shows the blackout to be the result of both human *and* non-human agencies coalescing in unpredictable ways, arguing that the breakdown enabled critical discourses regarding the nature of energy trading.

of allocating bulk water supplies on one hand, and the technical work of supplying water on the other.

Interruptions

Encounter 1:"The tank is completely empty today," says Omer [Pak Oasis employee responsible for RO plant maintenance]. I shine my mobile light into the tank below. He is right. A very faint reflection shines back at me, indicating there probably isn't enough water for the motors to pull. It may as well be empty. It seems like the RO plant, which has been malfunctioning for a couple of weeks (the only two functioning of a total six bores are jammed and waiting a repair crew) has had a substantial effect on today's supply. "Didn't the water come this afternoon?" I ask. Omer shrugs and tells me he doesn't know. After a brief pause, he asks me if I know whether the water will come today or not, and whether it was pumped earlier this week (it's Monday).

Before our conversation can continue any further, a motorcycle pulls up and parks next to the control room. It seems like Rahul is early. "Rahul is here, that means the water will be pumped today," says Omer blankly. He tells Rahul that the tank is virtually empty. Rahul shrugs. "That's what happens when the RO doesn't work." Rahul and I discuss the lack of water today. I ask why the tank is empty. After all, this is the first time I have seen the tank level drop so low. It's because the RO pump isn't working says Rahul straightforwardly. But what about the afternoon supply, I ask. That's usually quite reliable. But Rahul explains by telling me something I didn't know about city's supply schedule. "The city's water shuts down every week at 6pm on Sunday and is restarted the following Monday at 6pm. So, there's no afternoon supply for today." In short, it is hard to overestimate how important the supplementary RO supply is on days when there is no afternoon

supply. Rahul tells me today is going to be interesting because the "dangerous people" (zone 3) have their turn at 9pm today. (He is referring to how residents of zone 3 – the smallest pumping zone – routinely complain about a lack of water from Basin Station when it is their turn in the pumping schedule). "Today is going to be fun; just wait and see what Baseer has to say" he chuckles, referring to the son of a councilor who visits Samandar Station to ensure there is enough water for his area (zone 3).

It is 8:50pm and the water has begun to arrive. Because it is virtually empty, the sound of water crashing into the tank below is amplified considerably. At the same time, a very angry looking Baseer saunters up to the tank. "What have you [expletive] done to the RO plant?" he yells at Omer, confirming my observations about the supplementary supply's importance. Rahul chuckles as Omer explains; Baseer is told that the bores have stopped working and that he's made a complaint. I gather from Omer's explanation that his supervisor has been replaced. Omer says that the new supervisor is going to try his best, but other than passing on the information there's nothing much that he can do. Baseer cusses some more before violently pulling up the tank cover and shining his mobile phone into the subterranean chamber below. He sits there brooding and watching the water fall into the tank below before yelling at Rahul again about the lack of supply. The two of them go back and forth. "What do you expect," Rahul says eventually. "The water is never good on Mondays! It's only good on Tuesdays!" (Rahul is referring to the fact that there is a city-wide shutdown of Karachi's water network from 6pm on Sundays to 6pm on Mondays).

Baseer is loudly talking on the phone. I can't understand what he is saying because he is speaking in Pashto, but I make an educated guess and assume he is talking to someone about the lack of supply. After hanging up, Baseer tells Rahul

not to turn on the water motors without his say so. Rahul explains Baseer is trying to convince a local councilor from zone 1 to give him the water that is due to be pumped there 3am. "Why?" I ask Rahul quietly. "Because there isn't enough water today," Rahul explains. "So now Baseer is demanding that he get the 3am supply too. Fazl [zone 1] is still getting water every other day so it doesn't make too much of a difference to them, but Baseer [zone 3] only gets water once every week or so because his [zone] is much smaller." Meanwhile, Baseer runs to the control room, grabs one of the *chavis* [valve keys], and runs off toward the valves. I ask Rahul how Baseer, a community member, has permission to use the water board's equipment and work on public infrastructure. "What have I told you? It's their choice; they can do what they want."

It is past 9pm and Rahul's phone begins to ring. Rahul informs the callers from zone 3 that the water is falling in the tank but that he doesn't know when or if it will be pumped. "You'll have to ask Salman [local councilor and Baseer's father] about that." Baseer returns and tells Rahul he will call to tell him when to run the water. After sitting around for a few more minutes, Rahul checks the tank and informs us that only 3 stairs are submerged. He tells us that the water is coming with low pressure and that at this rate it will barely run for ten minutes. He further explains that Baseer wants to forgo the 9pm pumping time, wait until the 2:45am supply, and then pump the whole lot altogether to zone 3 at 3am. This involves stopping the pumping schedule as well as securing the water originally meant for zone 1 at 3am. Rahul calls Baseer and tells him how much water is in the tank, asking if he should turn the water on or not. The two argue a little bit more about the supply. Rahul is trying to explain that very little more water will arrive so there is no point in waiting any further. Eventually, Baseer tells Rahul to turn on the motors (relinquishing his

claim on the 3am supply). Rahul assures Baseer that he will run the entire tank. "Only one stair will be left, don't worry." A single motor is then turned on at around 9:15pm.

Encounter 2: "Where are you? You said you'd be at the pump." A resident from zone 2, let's call him F, is at Samandar Station and is angry that Rahul, the water operator on duty, is absent. Apparently, Rahul was on his way when he received the call because his motorcycle pulls up a few minutes later. It is 8:50pm. As Rahul unlocks the control room, I notice he is accompanied by another man (let's call him F2). F2 walks over to the tank cover to check the water. He looks over at Rahul and tells him there isn't enough water in there. Rahul assures him it will arrive as he pulls out his phone. Meanwhile, F2 takes a seat next to us. He strikes up a conversation with Omer and it turns out their families have been friends for a long time. I find out F2 is a resident of zone 2. His concern over the water level in the tank makes sense as residents of zone 2 are always complaining that zone 1 gets a great deal of water, but when it is there turn the supply from Basin Station is considerably less.. F2 and Omer talk about a murder that took place in Samandar Colony last night. To distract myself from the depressing details of this story (two breadwinners have died in a single family within two days over something senseless), I try to pay attention to Rahul's phone call to Jamshed at Basin Station. He is not yelling like I expect (the water is already late, and this tends to send Rahul into a rage). Instead, he is taking a measured, but stern tone.

"Look. If this continues, I'm just going to have to report you." It seems Jamshed has failed to pump the water on time again and Rahul is telling him he will have to complain. I suppose Jamshed assures Rahul he's going to turn the water on because

the latter hangs up and continues taking and making calls. From the snippets I gather, he is trading calls between his friends and zone 2 residents.

[A few minutes later]

Rahul is having a terse discussion on the phone. It is dangerously close to 9pm and the water still hasn't arrived. Something fishy is going on. If Jamshed had turned on the water like he said five minutes ago, and the water had been pumped earlier in the day and was hence still in the pipe, then the water should have arrived by now. Either there was no water pumped earlier (something unlikely because the RO cannot make as much water as Omer and I saw in the tank by itself), or Jamshed hasn't pumped the water yet. Sure enough, it is the latter case. Rahul, now visibly nervous, is talking to Hunr and the problem is that neither the latter nor Jamshed are at Basin Station. In short, there is nobody at the station up the road to pump water to the Samandar Station. Rahul is frantic. "How will the water run? You're going to get us all killed!" he yells frantically into the receiver. I think this moment has been building for a few days given Jamshed's erratic behavior. Judging by Rahul's panic – similar to, but far greater than the incident where he thought the exit valves were in the wrong position – it is also a real crisis situation. Suddenly, we are all paralyzed by the possibility of violence. A visibly shaken Rahul dials a different number. He tells his supervisor on the other line about the problem ("what kind of person have you sent us, sir?"). The water board official seems less perturbed than Rahul. The conversation lasts a few short minutes. Rahul instructs Omer to turn on the motor. It is past 9pm and it is better to send whatever supply there is in the tank onward. "Wait!" cries F2, jumping to his feet. "Don't turn it on yet! I need to get home!" He runs off into the night. Omer waits a full sixty seconds and then turns the motors on. Quietly, he tells Rahul that motor #1 is sounding worse than before, but the water engineer is more concerned with answering his phone. He alternates

between politely telling callers the water motors are on (no mention of a potential shortage) and yelling expletives at Jamshed in between phone calls.

A few minutes later, Rahul gets in touch with Hunr who has raced his motorcycle to Basin Station and turned on the water. About five minutes later the water begins cascading into the Samandar Station's tank. Omer and I flash our phone lights into the tank to make sure. The tank level has depleted significantly, but not to the point that the motors will not be able to suck the water until the level rises again. There will be no interruption in supply. Rahul, Omer, F, and I take a seat. Everything seems far calmer now. A sweating Rahul pops open a beer handed to him by F. The former's phone keeps ringing, but he can tell people with confidence that the water is on its way (and they are none the wiser).

[Several minutes later]

The motors change pitch. It has been 25 minutes since they were turned on. Just as I am getting ready to leave, a motorbike with Hunr astride pulls in. Rahul and Hunr discuss the fiasco at Basin Station. As it turns out, it was sheer luck that the latter happened to be nearby. It was only because he was in the vicinity that Hunr was able to pump the water within minutes of Rahul alerting him. When Hunr reached the pump, he found that it was padlocked and that Jamshed's motorcycle was parked in the compound.

"If the [Samandar Colony] people came to the pump they would have caught me" he says angrily. Hunr takes a seat next to me and continues describing what happened after he arrived at Basin Station. He first checked the tank and made sure the valves were in the correct position before pumping the water on to Samandar Station. While waiting to make sure all the water had been pumped, Hunr received a call from an individual who identified himself as a local councilor named Faisal through an alcohol-induced stupor. The caller then slurred something to the effect

that Jasmshed wasn't at the pump on the councilor's authority and that if Hunr makes a problem of the former's absence he would "send people to the pump." Hunr flatly refused to make any accommodations.

"I've seen people burn tires in front of me, grab me by the collar, accuse me of corruption, and threaten me with death during my service," Hunr says. "What more could they have done if he really was a councilor?" The two water board employees continue discussing Jamshed's irresponsibility and incompetence. For instance, like not checking whether the chamber valve at Basin Station is open (a closed valve leaves water in the pipes and makes the water smell rusty). Hunr points to the beer can in Rahul's hand and says there's nothing wrong with some fun, but that it shouldn't get in the way of one's duty.

These encounters demonstrate two very different responses machine operators had to potential interruptions in Samandar Colony's water supply. In the first incident, the possibility of a gap in supply was created by the actions of Baseer, a local community leader from zone 3, who was attempting to renegotiate the day's pumping schedule. Rahul, the machine operator on duty, did not intervene in this circumstance. Rather, he waited to be told where and when to pump the water available at Samandar Station. This was because Rahul saw this interruption to the scheduled pumping time as stemming from a dispute between two community leaders negotiated changes in the *wari* system. As a self-professed neutral state official, Rahul claimed he had no role to play in this situation ("I told you, it's their choice"). As such, Rahul stood by and let the community leaders of zone 1 and 2 sort out the supply amongst themselves. By contrast, in the second incident, where a potential supply gap was caused by an errant water board official at Basin Station, machine operators were quick to intervene. Both Rahul and Hunr scrambled to ensure the pumping schedule was not interrupted by making frantic

141

phone calls and physically travelling to Basin Station to turn on its water motors. This was because the potentially devastating supply gap was caused by a machine operator failing to do his job. These reactions to different sorts of interruption were not unique. Rather, they were repeated on other occasions as well. Specifically, when the *wari* system was being actively negotiated, machine operators would simply inform concerned residents how much water there was and to ask their respective local leader whether they were due for a pumping day. By contrast, there were several instances where machine operators intervened to prevent potential supply gaps from "technical" events. These included both non-human factors such as misadjusted valves, congested motors or – as in one notable instance – a power breakdown caused by an ambitious crow, and human factors such as water operators failing to turn up for shifts or communicating with each other to coordinate the supply between Basin and Samandar Stations.

In his important work, Andrew Barry (2002) argues that politics can be understood in terms of either a space of negotiation and contestation, or a domain of technicality where experts are concerned with metrological technologies. Barry's distinction is helpful because it sheds light on the wider, if unanticipated effects of the work Samandar Colony's machine operators do. Specifically, the two encounters narrated above show how these low-level state officials both reproduce and situate themselves within a duality. Concerned with their neutral personas, machine operators intervene to address interruptions in the water supply that are seen as emanating from technical, or otherwise "anti-political" (Ibid) sources. As incident 2 above shows, these include both the material components *and* "social infrastructures" (Simone, 2004) essential to the technical work of supplying water to Samandar Colony.[88] At the same time, however, machine operators actively refrain from intervening in interruptions that come from *political* (what residents

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[88] As Julia Elyachar (2010) also notes, infrastructures are not only material but also composed of "phatic labor", social infrastructures of "communicative channels" that play an essential role in the transfer of goods and services.

refer to as "*siyaasi*") sources. Such an interruption is most visibly illustrated in incident 1 where disputes and negotiations between community leaders over the allotment of bulk supplies can create unanticipated delays or full-scale gaps in the pumping schedule. As the incident further demonstrates, these last minute changes and negotiations are highly political given the simmering disputes between each of the three pumping zones over bulk supplies.

As these incidents show, then, by responding very differently to various interruptions based on their professed neutrality, Samandar Colony's machine operators enact a distinction between the technical work of supplying water, and the political processes of allocating uncertain water supplies. This distinction is not only (re)produced discursively as machine operators constantly reiterate the purview and limits of their responsibility to settlement residents, each other, and outsiders (such as researchers). Instead, machine operators materially enact a politics of neutrality in working on (and refraining to work on) Samandar Colony's water infrastructure at particular moments.

Conclusion: The Politics of Engineering Neutrality

In this chapter, I have elaborated on the work of Samandar Colony's machine operators to demonstrate precisely how the precarious work of supplying water to the settlement is made possible. Working amidst the social and material uncertainties of Karachi's water network, these machine operators constantly make opaque and incalculable hydrologies knowable. But, in doing so, their actions have wider effects that far exceed the relative ability of settlement residents to access water. In Samandar Colony, where breakdowns, supply variations, possible theft, and the ability of community leaders to send water where they desire are common, machine operators have learnt to use the information they produce daily to perform the role of "neutral" public officials. As neutral officials,

machine operators claim they are concerned with the technical aspects of water supply rather than the politics – or "*siyasat*" – of everyday access; particularly in terms of how bulk water supplies are allocated between Samandar Colony's three pumping zones. But, as machine operators turn valves to produce water in the right place at the expected time, maintain Samandar Station's water infrastructure, and provide information about pumping times and water levels to all who ask, they paradoxically recreate a hydraulic status quo.

Indeed, by refraining from intervening in the everyday negotiations and disputes that determine how bulk water is allocated throughout the settlement, machine operators actively reproduce the unpredictability of the *wari* system. As Graham and Marvin (2001) write in this respect, infrastructures are "precarious achievements" which are constantly susceptible to interruptions caused by human and non-human forces. The literature on infrastructural maintenance suggests that gaps in supply are not abnormal but an intrinsic trait of infrastructures that require constant attention (see Baptista 2018; Graham and Thrift, 2007). As Stephen Graham puts it, "infrastructure networks, despite their occasional veneer of permanence, stability, and ubiquity, are never structures that are given in the order of things" (Graham, 2010: 9). In this respect, the interruptions that characterize Samandar Colony's water supply system can be read as "normal." Closer attention to the settlement's motley crew of pipes, motors, and valves – as well as the subjectivities that determine their operation – shows that interruptions are intrinsic to how the water network functions. But, while interruptions are common in Samandar Colony just as they are in other parts of Karachi and, indeed, other cities around the world (Anand, 2017), not all gaps in supply are normalized. At the often quiet but sometimes eventful Samandar Station, interruptions that emanate from the *wari* system are a standard component in the distribution of water. Negotiated pumping schedules are a significant tool which community leaders and water board officials use to ensure the all

three of Samandar Colony's pumping zones receives water. By contrast, supply gaps that are associated with material and personnel failures of a technical nature – such as those to do with improperly adjusted valves or errant water board officials – are aberrant in terms of how Samandar Colony's water network typically functions. In maintaining this distinction on the basis of "neutrality", machine operators reproduce the idiosyncrasies – the "materials and histories" (Anand, 2017: 163) – of Samandar Colony's water infrastructure.

Of course, as the technical work of machine operators reproduces precarity, it also politicizes water as a resource. While machine operators claim their work is limited to a metrological and information-based domain, they also implicate themselves in the everyday politics of access by deferring to the authority of Samandar Colony's local leaders. In making this argument, I am not suggesting water operators have the capacity or ability to act on all sorts of interruptions, simply deciding which to intervene in based on unconstrained decision-making capabilities. Machine operators, like many of Karachi's residents living and working in a fitful city, do what they must to secure their professional and personal safety. Rather, I am suggesting that, despite their claims to neutrality, machine operators actively engineer – albeit from a technical domain – Karachi's mercurial hydrologies. In the final chapter, I explore how the city's residents are responding to the difficulties and uncertainties of water access described in this and the previous chapter. As Samandar Colony is increasingly characterized by everyday uncertainty in terms of urban service delivery, Karachi's urban poor use the temporally bound, institutionalized domain of electoral politics to alleviate their material concerns.

CHAPTER 5

"THE PROPHET'S BALLOT"

Elections, Patronage, and the Right to the City

In June 2018, with just a few weeks left before Pakistan's general election on July 25th, the Karachi settlement I call Samandar Colony was a hotbed of activity. Plastered with flags, banners, and other paraphernalia bearing the symbols of various political parties, the settlement had transformed from a residential area into a colorful mural of campaigns. The mood was of equal parts celebration and urgency. With the holy month of Ramadan over, workers from a variety of Karachi's political parties were frantically setting up corner offices in local shops; songs and recorded speeches blared out of massive speakers conspicuously wired to electrical poles; and impromptu rallies – often held at night to avoid the summer heat – were where stalwarts, incumbents, and aspiring office holders presented their case to be (re)elected. But, despite their efforts to delineate themselves from each other, candidates from different political parties made the same promises to provide jobs, development, and urban services. In Karachi, dry municipal pipes meant that water was a topic of incredible salience across electoral campaigns. With "*paani chanhiye, vote do*" [If you want water, vote] becoming a rallying call to secure votes in Samandar Colony, election season was in full swing.

Election in which campaigns are run on promising particularistic benefits, rather than long-term policy proposals, are common in postcolonial countries like Pakistan. Often described as instances of patronage politics where "vote-buying" practices dilute the power of platform democracy (see Chandra, 2004; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007), South

Asian scholarship has more recently shown that exchanging votes for particularistic benefits like water is not antithetical to but a fundamental part of how democratic institutions work in countries like India and Pakistan (Björkman, 2014a, 2014c; Adnan Naseemullah and Chhibber, 2018a). Instances of "vote-buying", as Anastasia Pivliasky (2014: 3) notes, are rather institutionalized moments of political action where social groups seek to "elect one of their own to provide for them", working outside the "gridlock of liberal political heuristics" to secure things like jobs, development projects in their communities, and access to urban services.

In Samandar Colony for instance, older residents often describe how their "*barāy*" [elders] – village heads, community organizers, and elected officials like councilors – promise to construct piped connections, pave roads, and provide sanitation infrastructures in the run-up to elections. For the settlement's families, "selling" votes for potable water, jobs, and housing is not just about securing materialistic gains. Instead, it is, and has long been, about finding ways to alleviate the precarity of settlement in Karachi. Turning attention away from daily coping mechanisms like purchasing water, this chapter explores the various ways residents of Samandar Colony use the temporal window of elections – a time when state officials, party workers, and hopeful candidates are willing to lend an ear to the needs of the urban poor – to put formal institutions to work for them, however briefly. It explores not only how residents vote to *directly* address their daily concerns – by exchanging their votes to secure urban services like water (potable or otherwise) – but also how they increasingly find opportunities to *indirectly* make these very claims.

Where the latter is concerned, this chapter examines the rise of a new player in Karachi's politics; the far-right Islamic party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). Though the TLP campaigned aggressively in the run-up to the 2018 general election, it secured only two electoral wins across Pakistan. Both came from provincial constituencies in

Karachi, far from the party's roots in rural Punjab. But, though the TLP failed to secure a noticeable presence in the country's provincial and national assemblies, it secured a significant number of votes across Karachi. Indeed, the TLP found its way to the top three parties in one each of Samandar Colony's two provincial and national constituencies, securing upwards of 50,000 votes throughout. Many of the settlement's residents explained the TLP's popularity in terms of the party's religious commitments. While both religious and secular parties championed an end to water shortages, better infrastructure, and more development in Karachi's deteriorating housing settlements, the TLP promised nothing more than a vague enactment of "*Khatm-e-Nubuwat*" – the Islamic principle declaring the Holy Prophet Mohammad's place as the last messenger of Allah.

In the wake of the July 2018 general elections, popular discourses have explained the TLP's rise in terms of a changing political landscape which allowed a pious electorate to express its religious preferences (see Ahmed, 2018; Chaudhry, 2018). After the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) imploded and fractured into various sub-groups in 2016, its constituencies were opened to new political players.[89] And for reporters and political scientists in Pakistan, the TLP took advantage of the political vacuum in Karachi to spread its one point agenda of *Khatm-e-Nubuwat*. For instance, in one of the few profiles on the party's leader Khadim Husain Rizvi, Ahmed Yusuf of the daily *Dawn* writes that the TLP's rise stems from its ability to combine grassroots political organization and religious rhetoric in low-income areas (Yusuf, 2018). Rank and file TLP workers ensured that the "the mosque replaced the mohalla [neighborhood] network in localities previously labelled hardcore MQM areas" such that the TLP combined preaching with a winning political strategy to get votes (Ibid). A scholarly explanation of the TLP's popularity might complement this narrative by also highlighting the politics of class. For

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[89] The MQM once had an iron-grip on Karachi's politics and development (see Ahmar, 1996; Gayer, 2014; Khan, 2010, 2017). Since 2016, the party's public image has been marred by infighting splinter groups (Walsh and Rehman, 2015).

instance, Amit Ahuja and Pradeep Chhibber (2012:3) writing in the context of India argue that the poor "face a capricious state that mostly ignores or mistreats them except on Election Day." The marginalized thus vote to be heard and become formally visible, however briefly. For the poor, voting is therefore a way to enjoy their otherwise limited "political rights" (Ibid: 17), even if only symbolically. Moreover, Ahuja and Chhibber's work has prompted Adnan Naseemullah (with Chhibber, 2018a, 2018b) to associate elections in Pakistan and the 2018 polls in particular with feelings of "anti-incumbency" on the part of voters. This explanation fits well with the TLP's status as a new party, its support in Karachi's low income areas, and its unmaterialistic message of *Khatm-e-Nubuwat*.[90] Indeed, one could argue that with the MQM's iron grip on Karachi broken, the TLP was an ideal choice for the marginalized poor to vote and be heard.

In this chapter, I do not argue that these explanations are out of place. Instead, I show that the TLP's popularity in Samandar Colony is indicative of how residents actively appropriate – make their own – electoral campaigns to *rearticulate* demands for material goods such as water, roads, and sanitations. Much like exchanging votes for material benefits (which a majority of the settlement's residents continue to do), support for the TLP signifies how the urban poor employ democratic institutions to meet their needs in ways that remain uncaptured by theories of liberal democratic politics.

This chapter is based on a study of interview data and field observations from two distinct parts of Samandar Colony. The first is Hindu Para, the oldest part of the settlement where I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork in 2017 and 2018. The second is Katchi Para, a newer part of Samandar Colony I visited in 2018.[91] While residents in the

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[90] The TLP was not the only "fringe" political party that made inroads in electorates traditionally associated with religious parties (see Jamal, 2018). Another was the notorious extremist Hafiz Saeed's Allah-o-Akbar Tehreek. But the latter's performance was minimal compared to the TLP as data from the Election Commission of Pakistan shows (tables 5.1, 5.2 below).

[91] My engagement in Katchi Para was initially a way to further explore the themes surrounding water access I had encountered during my conversations with residents of Hindu Para (see chapter 3). I was interested in learning whether residents in Katchi Para, a relatively newer part of

former make direct demands for urban services, it is in the latter where election talk also entails a desire to support the TLP's campaign of *Khatm-e-Nubuwat* to indirectly achieve these benefits.

I first review the literature on elections in the South Asian context. In this section, I highlight the difference between rational-choice inspired accounts of patronage democracies and interpretive accounts of elections which, in analyzing exchanges of votes for materialistic goods, paint the average voter as either a rent-seeking actor or a political insurgent respectively. While the latter accounts for the many ways in which political claims are made in South Asia democracies, I suggest it is also important to see the average voter as engaging in indirect forms of politicking; ones in which votes are not *directly* exchanged for particularistic benefits but in which elections continue to be an opportunity for everyday people to make claims to state resources, jobs, and other tangible goods. I then turn attention to Karachi's Samandar Colony, exploring the ways in which the settlement's residents use the brief, institutionalized moment of elections to address the otherwise constant uncertainty of their living circumstances. As the initial empirical sections show, this certainly involves negotiations over directly exchanging votes for material goods, opportunities, and urban services both in the run up to and during elections. But in examining the rise of the TLP, the latter half of this chapter also explores the *indirect* ways in which residents make claims to these benefits and by extension seek to address their everyday precarity.

Electoral Publics

In her highly influential account of ethnic political parties in India, Kanchan Chandra (2004) explores the rationality of the average voter in the world's largest democracy.

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the settlement faced the same problems as other parts of Samandar Colony. While speaking to families about water, however, I stumbled upon narratives such as Daudi Sahib's that directed my attention towards studying electoral discourses.

Chandra bases her analysis on an understanding of India as a "patronage-democracy" where leaders are chosen by elections, but where state resources are monopolized by the public sector and elected officials have considerable influence in distributing things like jobs, services, and other goods. Writes Chandra, what distinguishes a patronage-democracy is the relative "power of elected officials to distribute the vast resources controlled by the state to voters on an *individualized* basis, by exercising their discretion in the implementation of state policy" (Ibid: 7, my emphasis). As Chandra further argues, what ultimately matters for the average voter in patronage-democracies are the particularistic and material benefits they may receive by voting in favor of a specific candidate. Perhaps the most surprising implication of this suggestion, as Chandra herself notes, is that ethnic parties have no natural advantage over non-ethnic parties in their respective ethnic groups because voters are ultimately "instrumental actors" who only put stock in their own identity in as far as it allows them to maximize their ability to secure "material or psychic goods or some combination of the two" (Ibid: 12).

One of the most widely cited political science works on elections in South Asia, Chandra's account of Indian voters who "divest identity" (Ibid) in favor of material and particularistic benefits is grounded in a traditional understanding of the phenomenon of patronage. Elaborated over the years through various terms like "machine-politics", "clientelism", or "vote-buying", elections in South Asian countries like India and Pakistan have typically been described as systems of exchange that are structured by relationships between powerful patrons and their dependent clients.[92] According to this logic of analysis, voters do not make electoral choices on the basis of a particular party's policy proposals or political platforms. Rather, they support the election bid of a powerful patron – often a man of wealth and/or community influence – with the

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[92] See (Piliavsky, 2014) for a recent overview. Though the presence of such patronage politics is common in the Global South in general and in South Asian in particular, systems of electoral exchange have long been present in the Global North as well (see Chubb, 2009; Judd, 2015; Shefter, 1977).

expectation that he will provide jobs and money, improve access to services like potable water and sanitation, or use his official status to secure development funds for a particular community (see Baldwin, 2013; Hasnain, 2005; Nassemullah and Chhibber, 2018). As such, many scholars argue that elections in South Asia have failed to disperse democratic norms.[93] The electoral process and, by extension, the rationality of the average voter is not only criticized for lacking a concern with policy and platform democracy, but also understood as a transactional exchange where citizens vote based on the patron's demonstrable ability to provide essential services and development projects.

For instance, in a work that is characteristic of this thinking, Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) describe patronage as an inefficient system where both voters and politicians must employ elaborate methods to gauge whether the other side will hold up their end of the bargain. For Kitschelt and Wilkinson, the root of the problem is that democratic norms of accountability are replaced by "the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment" (Ibid: 2). In short, the assumption in much of this scholarship is that votes are "for sale", and that the average (South Asian) voter makes electoral choices on the basis of a cost-benefit analyses that almost mechanistically allocates support for the highest bidder.[94]

In Pakistan, too, popular accounts view patronage as typical of elections. For instance, in a piece entitled "Political Handouts Thrive in Pakistan", Declan Walsh (2013) of the *New York Times* writes that for the average Pakistani citizen, "votes are dictated less by the strategic issues that concern Western allies — combating the Taliban, rescuing an

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[93] Interpretations that view patronage as evidence of "failed" democratization characterize some the earliest (Flynn, 1974; Scott, 1972) and subsequent (Breman, 1993; Fox 1994) explorations of the subject. The idea that electoral exchange, vote-buying, or patronage politics is antithetical to the basis of democratic freedom is also a consistently made argument (see Akhter, 2011; Blunt et al., 2012; Bratton, 2008; de Wit, 1996; Kapur and Vaishnav, 2018; Stokes, 2005, 2013).

[94] As Lisa Björkman (2014) notes, even interpretivist or constructivist accounts of "vote-buying" in this vein assume that ballots can, with varying degrees of agency or subjugation on the part of voters, be bought (see Schaffer, 2007).

ailing economy or shaping policy toward Afghanistan — and more by immediate

concerns about legal protection and government handouts."[95]

Figure 5.1: "One nation, one voice against the tanker mafia!"

A cursory look at election campaigns in Karachi suggests that Walsh is not entirely

wrong in his criticism of Pakistani democracy. In a city where dry pipes exist alongside

the ubiquitous presence of tankers clogging up the streets, water is a cornerstone of

nearly every single political campaign. Indeed, the 2018 manifestos of the Pakistan

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[95] Indeed, talk of "electables" – influential candidates who offer political parties large vote banks in exchange for party tickets – pervades popular accounts of the distinctly *undemocratic* nature of elections in Pakistan. For typical examples appearing in the Pakistani media, see "Curse of the electables" (Azad, 2018), "Why 'electables'" (Dawn, 2018), "The rise of the electables" (Azad, 2018).

People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, two of the country's most powerful parties, both promise better management of urban water resources. For some independent candidates in Karachi such as the young and idealistic Jibran Nasir, providing potable water and ending the shadowy "tanker mafia" forms the entire basis of a campaign (figure 5.1 above). Such politicking is not limited to the cities low-income areas either. For instance, in one notable report published in *The Express Tribune* (Kazi, 2018), the author described how access to potable water structured voter concerns for both "affluent areas" and "adjoining slums" during a 2018 run-off election in a constituency close to Samandar Colony:

> KARACHI: Given that water shortage remains a major issue in the areas falling under PS-111 constituency, it is no surprise that various candidates in the run for Sunday's election have made water scarcity the core issue of their campaign. The constituency includes the affluent areas of Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and Clifton as well as the adjoining slum areas. The residents of these localities suffer as neither the Clifton Cantonment Board (CBC) nor the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) is able to meet the water demands of the residents, thereby forcing residents to purchase water through tankers. While political parties and their candidates have been running lukewarm campaigns in their strongholds, some have been assuring people to restore their water troubles… Almost all the candidates, in their own unique way, are assuring constituents that they will resolve the water crisis. [PTI's candidate] Qureshi, who is also the information secretary of PTI Karachi, claims that water is the biggest issue faced by the residents of this constituency and claims that his party leader and prime minister [Imran Khan] will resolve the issue.

These scholarly and popular accounts solidify the notion of an instrumental, gain-seeking voter. In Karachi, such a voter is preoccupied with materialistic benefits like water, but may also vote in favor of patrons that provide roads, jobs, and cash handouts. Yet, as Anastasia Piliavsky (2014: 22) writes, the "calculus of rational choice offers one very distinct set of values, which pivot around the calculating, profit-seeking individual when trying to explain how politicians lead and why people follow them in South Asia. In contrast to these rational-choice inspired perspectives, ethnographic accounts paint a vastly different picture of the patronized voter as concerned with idealistic, ethereal, and

sometimes distinctly moral and rights-driven electoral choices.[96] Far from "[divesting] identity" (Chandra, 2004: 12), voters seek to operationalize webs of entitlements and obligations and make distinctly *political* claims in the process. As such, instances of vote-buying or machine politics are a "vernacularization" (Michelutti, 2007) of elections in the postcolonial context, the very "stuff" of democratic politics (Björkman; 2014) manifesting in social groups exchanging votes for benefits like jobs, water, and sanitation.

This is especially apparent in the urban South, where short-lived moments of electoral participation are held against the backdrop of unplanned urbanization and the spatial and cultural legacies of empire. For instance, in his highly influential reading of urban Brazil, James Holston (2008, 2009) makes a case for "insurgent citizenship." As Holston argues in his analysis of grassroots mobilizations at Brazil's urban peripheries, the poor demand housing and basic services, not as entitlements granted by powerful patrons, but as the "struggle for the right to have a daily life in the city worthy of a citizen's dignity" (Holston, 2009: 246). It is therefore at the very site of marginalization – in terms of the necessities like water, security, and housing that make life possible – that the peripheralized demand their inclusion in the city. For Holston, the urban poor's efforts do not signify a desire to become rights bearing individuals in a predefined order of (liberal) citizenship, but a conflict over what citizenship *means* and how it might be achieved. Read in the light of insurgent citizenship, material exchanges for votes in patronized elections shed light on the urban poor as an electoral public that is embroiled in a struggle over the city itself. Here, the urban poor vote for representatives promising

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[96] For example, in his analysis of the ruling class in 19th century India, Chris Bayly (1977) argued that patron-client relations were stuck between competing instrumental and social imperatives. Bayly argued that powerful bankers and money lenders could only instrumentalize their patron status for financial gain if they simultaneously solidified social and religious relations by redistributing the wealth they acquired to begin with. Historians like Bayly thus decades ago demonstrated the meaning-laden quality of patron-client relationships. In more recent writings, such relationships are more than pre-modern practice of previously hierarchical postcolonial societies. Patronage as a form of political contestation can be seen not only in India (Jaffrelot, 2007; Price and Srinivas, 2014; Webb, 2012; Witsoe, 2011), but also Indonesia (Berenschot and van Klinken, 2018) and South Africa (Dawson, 2014).

particularistic benefits not only because they must find ways to acquire highly contested resources that are legally, extralegally, or culturally rendered outside their grasp. Rather, in addition, they vote for better access to potable water, city infrastructure, and housing because in doing so they shape the city as more egalitarian space in which they have a right to live dignified lives.[97]

As I demonstrate below, insurgent citizenship as a concept is useful in showing why Samandar Colony's residents vote for candidates promising better urban services, jobs, and security. But, while residents vote for the water, sanitation, or "development" candidate, I also found an undercurrent in which families expressed their support for a new political face. In a community known as Katchi Para, residents expressed their support for the TLP, a rising, far-right Islamic party that did not campaign on promises to provide services like water, but religious morality in a system of "*Khatam-e-Nubuwat*" [finality of the Holy Prophet]. As to why residents of Katchi Para suddenly supported the distinctly *unmaterialistic* and vague nature of the TLP's campaign despite their ongoing problems with things like potable water is unanswered by both the concept of insurgent citizenship and instrumental accounts of patronage-democracies. This is because both concepts assume that elections in contexts like Pakistan are always directly centered on particularistic gains. Either for short-term instrumental needs or for a larger struggle over urban citizenship itself, the poor are seen as directly exchanging their votes for potable water, sanitation, housing, or security. Such an assumption, however, limits our understanding of how the urban poor might make claims to the city and, more generally, employ formal democratic institutions to meet their needs.

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[97] Holston himself centers his discussion of insurgent citizenship on the acts of grassroots organizations and neighborhood associations that politicize things like motherhood. Here, I draw attention to how insurgent citizenship might also exist in the arena of elections, where meaning-laden patronage bonds help the urban poor enact their right to the city through a more narrow understanding of democratic participation.

In his original 1968 work *Le droit à la ville*, Henri Lefebvre (1986) introduced the "right to the city" as a call to action to reclaim the urban space that had become alienated through commodification and regimes of property rights. Lefebvre's highly influential slogan has since been coopted by liberal-democratic narratives of urban democratization and inclusion (see, for instance, UN-HABITAT 2010). But, as Mark Purcell (2014: 142) writes, Lefebvre's original formulation was far more radical in that it described a "wider political struggle for revolution." Here, I draw on Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city, not to describe Marxist-inspired claims for de-alienation in Karachi, but as a way to explore how the city's urban poor use the critical arena of elections to make "the space of the city their own again" (Ibid).[98] The empirical sections below demonstrate this by tracing how elections continue to be characterized by efforts at insurgent citizenship with residents making direct, materialistic claims to secure their place in the city.[99] In addition, however, I also explore how, in supporting the TLP's *unmaterialistic* dictum of *Khatam-e-Nubuwat*, Karachi's urban poor increasingly find ways to indirectly make claims to these very material benefits and, by extension, their right to the city.

"They did a lot for us"

Throughout my fieldwork in Samandar Colony, residents answered my questions about water with talk of elections. "When elections happen we get water" was a near-universal response to the question "Do you get water here?" When I asked residents to elaborate or provide specific examples, they cited how their *barāy* (unofficial community leaders

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[98] Henri Lefebvre's (1986 [1968]) original conception of the right to the city has since been brought into conversation with a variety of urban issues including the neoliberal restructuring of cities (Aalbers and Gibb, 2014; Harvey, 2010; Purcell, 2002); urban redevelopment (Fernandes, 2007; Shine, 2013); the spatial dynamics of cities divided by race (McCann, 1999); and sectarian violence (Kuymulu, 2013; Nagle, 2009) in both the global North and south. Here, I seek to bring the concept of the right to the city in direct conversation with a particular performance register of urban citizenship: the everyday meanings that structure elections in Karachi.

[99] Like in Samandar Colony, a right to be included in the city as expressed through demands for urban services has long been made by voting publics in other contexts (see Anand, 2017; Appadurai, 2002; Clarke, 2013; Das, 2011).

like elders as well as elected officials like councilors and legislators) regularly campaigned on promising a permanent end to water shortages, as well as regular trash collection, newly paved roads, and other long-term fixes to many of Samandar Colony's persistent problems. As residents explained, this pattern of promising concrete development in return for votes was common to all the major parties that had been active in the settlement for thirty years; the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and the MQM.

During my first trip to Samandar Colony in 2017, descriptions of elections as materialistic exchanges for urban services in general and water in particular were common. When I visited the community again in summer 2018, just three months from Pakistan's general election, such talk was everywhere. Many families expressed the need to give a "chance" to incumbent candidates who swore to make Samandar Colony a better place to live. When I asked them to explain what reason they had to believe a particular candidate would fulfill their campaign promises, residents referred to how *baray* in the past had developed Samandar Colony. For instance, Lalitha Aunty and her husband Madhu, who had lived in the settlement since 1980, described how elected officials of the PPP had greatly improved residents' lives by providing crucial service infrastructures. When I first visited their home in 2018, Lalitha Aunty described Samandar Colony as a wonderful place to live, regardless of the water and sanitation issues people in her lane currently faced. Indeed, the old couple was optimistic about long term changes coming to Samandar Colony if Imran Khan's PTI came to power. This was precisely because they saw in him the same potential as PPP's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his daughter Benazir who had "done work" for residents in the past:

> Me: Why do you think something will change?
> Madhu: Because he's new [Imran Khan].
> Me: He will change things because he's new?
> Madhu: He's new. So, to get the votes he will do almost anything. Greed is a bad thing. But that is why he's going to be successful.

Lalitha: Who knows? If he bowls well he might win the cup! [Laughs] But only if he works hard!

Madhu: We've tried everyone; Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif – now see, Bhutto did a lot for us.

Me: What did Bhutto do for you?

Lalitha: Yes, Bhutto *sahib* did a lot for us. I remember when I was small, I saw so many things that he did in Hyderabad and here.

Madhu: He did a lot. We shouldn't forget him. He did a lot of things for the poor. He was very good for minorities, and his daughter [Benazir] was too.

Lalitha: We usually vote for [PPP] because of Bhutto sahib and his daughter. We voted for her because of him.

Madhu: Whatever vote we have we give to them. We will this time too.

Me: You won't vote for them this time?

Madhu: We will.

Lalitha: If they do work for us. He [Bhutto] used to do work for us. Benazir also did work for us.

Madhu: But he hasn't done anything at all. He's just helped himself.

Me: Who hasn't done anything at all?

Madhu: [The current party chief] Zardari. He hasn't done anything like Bhutto, has he?

Lalitha: No, he's just interested in building malls, and building flats on top of malls. If he's so concerned with that why would he look to the poor?

Madhu: Benazir wasn't like that. She supported us.

Lalitha: She cared for us a lot. And Bhutto sahib was so good to us, may Allah grant him paradise.

Me: What did Bhutto sahib do for [Samandar Colony]?

Lalitha I'm not sure what he did for us here. But what I do remember is that he did a lot in Hyderabad.

Madhu: No, no, he did a lot here too.

Pressed for concrete examples regarding what the previous *barāy* had done for Samandar Colony, Lalitha Aunty and Madhu claimed, in exceedingly general terms, how elected officials and community leaders had supported families over the course of the community's history. For example, the PPP was credited with such significant tasks as providing trunk water infrastructures, paving roads, building sanitation systems, providing health facilities and handing out jobs. Residents thus continued to justify voting for them, and, to a lesser extent, other parties on the basis of securing material benefits. But, like Lalitha Aunty and Madhu, residents could not point to specific examples, specific timeframes, or specific *projects* in which elected representatives had played a significant role. Instead, they described these developments in general terms ("they did a lot for us"), pointing to how Samandar Colony had changed from a

collection of "*jhuggis*" [mud huts/slums] to a "*pucca*" [solid/permanent] settlement with concrete structures, local shops, and (now heavily polluted and unusable) public amenities such as parks.[100] In doing so, however, Lalitha Aunty and Madu, and indeed many other residents described elections as inherently materialistic exchanges of votes for benefits like water, jobs, and security.

When it comes time to visit the ballot box, however, securing these benefits involves a considerable degree of contestation and negotiation; relationships with various *baray* do not produce results until they are made to. Residents must actively work to leverage their votes for material benefits; they must make their demands for water, jobs, and other benefits explicit; deploy the language of rights and entitlements; and ground desires for material well-being by forcing candidates' to recognize their everyday precarity. Below, I relate two ethnographic encounters – a meeting with an elected official and observations of Hindu Para's *awami* [people's] water tanks – that capture the contestation and negotiation that characterize election time in Karachi.

"Because elections are coming"

An ethnic Pashtun, Farhan ran for union council vice-chairman on a PPP ticket in the 2015 local body elections. Farhan's campaign was similar to those of others; he promised an end to water shortages, a sanitation overhaul, and more development in Samandar Colony. Given both his party affiliation and his status as a community elder, Hindu Para's residents voted for him because they were confident he would fulfill his promises. After two years as an elected official, however, residents, once excited about the prospect of Farhan representing them ("he was from our community"), now described him as a selfish and immoral person who was using his political office for personal gain ("we

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[100] Many residents also spoke of Zulfikar and Benazir Bhutto's efforts to develop Karachi's low-income areas in the 1970s under the slogan of "*roti, kapra, makkan*" [food, clothing, shelter]. Bhutto's efforts are well documented in both scholarly and civil society accounts (see Ahmed et al., 2016; Hasan et al. 2013; and Qadeer, 1996).

barely even see his face"). The bone of contention for residents was Farhan's alleged shutdown of government sponsored relief water tankers. During interviews in 2017, residents accused Farhan of putting a stop to the government tankers that occasionally covered potable water shortages in Samandar Colony. The plot thickened in that Farhan was accused of stopping government-sponsored tankers in order to run a private water business. Residents pointed to how he had bought himself a new house, a new phone, and a new car after he was elected. When asked, Farhan would explain these were gifts from his son, who ran a private tanker business. Residents asked how it was possible for Farhan's son to run a private tanker business in a water-starved settlement without using his father's considerable political clout as a union council vice-chairman. In 2017, after many failed attempts, I finally secured a meeting with the man himself through Ihlam, a PPP supporter who I had met during my very first trip to Samandar Colony. At the time, I was still making sense of how residents accessed water. But, as the following excerpt from my field notes demonstrates, the interview quickly turned into a contentious encounter between Farhan and Imad.

A black Toyota Corolla with tinted windows trawls past us. "He's here" says Farhan's son. Sure enough, a few minutes later a man walks towards us. He is old, in his 60s at least. He is dressed in an extremely clean white *shalwar kameez*. On his head rests a traditional prayer hat and his face is covered by an enormous beard. Everyone stands and greets him. Farhan's phone rings and he answers. I try to eavesdrop and pick up the conversation about water. "Ask that [expletive] who gave him permission to go to the RO [reverse osmosis] plant." Farhan continues: "I can't promise the water today but tomorrow." He then invites me sit down on one of the larger *charpai's* outside one of the hotels. "Tell me," Farhan says ""How can I help you?" I ask about the community's water problems. Farhan explains that Samandar Colony is at the very tail

161

end of the distribution system. He says the settlement had water earlier, but that since then, various housing schemes have tapped into the trunk mains, leaving little water for Samandar Colony's residents. Farhan says he complained to the KWSB Managing Director Misbah Fareed and the Karachi Corp Commander, but nothing changed. "Now you tell me, what can we do against the army?" If there is no theft, says Farhan, then we will get water. I tell Farhan how I read the newspaper while abroad and, often, there are stories about a shadowy tanker mafia that works hand in glove with public officials. "Is this true?" Farhan replies: "Nobody can stop our water. If they try we'll stop them." But then where is the water I ask. Farhan gestures to the surrounding houses on both sides of the street. "Look at the population growth!" he exclaims. "Look around at how many people live here! When you look at the urbanization in the last 15 years and the unchanged water source what do you think will happen?" I ask if there are illegal connections in Samandar Colony. Without missing a beat Farhan says "*Bilkul* [absolutely]." I pause, waiting for him to elaborate. No other information is offered. "How does this happen?" I ask. "Under cover of darkness people make their connections" says Farhan. He explains that many such connections have been destroyed in the past and that he will continue doing so in his capacity as vice-chairman.

[We continue to discuss the problem of "illegal" connections. Farhan relates how a local cleric was caught in the act of selling connections to the 12-inch pipes that runs the length of Samandar Colony. Eventually, the vice chairman turns to touting the work he has done for the settlement's residents].

Farhan explains that all he can do is his best. He talks about the park he built and the girl's school he commissioned. Ihlam speaks up: "And what about Hindu Para, what have you done for that place?" Farhan's relaxed demeanor gives way to anger. He yells about paving Hindu Para's streets, fixing its sanitation problems, and putting

up street lights. Then, in a lighter tone, he tells Ihlam that "work will start in Hindu Para in a few days, don't worry." Ihlam mutters in response: "that's because elections are coming." Farhan yells again, telling Ihlam that the residents of Hindu Para don't support him like they did before. He looks at me, puts his hand on my shoulder, and says "with you as my witness if five people write to me about a problem and I don't fix this problem you can take me to the barber and have my beard shaved." Meanwhile, men are milling around the heated discussion. There's a large group sitting behind us. They keep looking over their shoulders, smirking at the things being said. "It's the PTI government now!" a voice pipes up from behind me. Farhan shoots the man a dirty look. Ihlam asks what Farhan has done for him personally. "Why did you ask for 2 lacs [roughly $1,200] when I asked you for a job?" Farhan looks at me again and says he did all that he could, but that he couldn't be held responsible for a promise falling through.

This encounter demonstrates two points. First, Samandar Colony's residents expected Farhan to provide them material resources from a position of power. Indeed, in rebutting Ihlam's accusations by claiming to provide street lights, Farhan was explaining how he honored his responsibility as a representative of Samandar Colony. Second and closely related, it was precisely because elections were a few months away that residents could both demand such particularistic benefits and hold Farhan accountable for failing to provide while in office. This can be seen in how the union council vice-chairman promised to carry out more work, even pointing to specifics tasks he had done in the past such as fixing lights and paving roads. In relating this incident, I do not mean to adjudicate the truth contest of either Farhan's claims or those of the Hindu Para residents present at the meeting. Instead, I seek to demonstrate how the competing claims themselves – on full display that night in 2017 but also common in daily

conversations with residents – shed light on the brief window of open haggling – between elected representatives and their constituents for particularistic benefits – that accompanies the domain of electoral politics in Karachi.

Awami Tanks

My first encounter with the *awami* tanks was in 2017 when I was invited to see how water was distributed (see figure 5.2). I observed how residents (mostly women and children) jostled back and forth in a cue with all manner of pots, plastic bottlers, and makeshift cans at the ready. An old man sat next to a cylindrical tank encased in concrete, filling people's containers via a hose pipe connected to the bottom of the structure. "This is one of the ways we supply water" said Khalil, a PTI worker, explaining that another similar tank was located at the opposite end of Hindu Para. Khalil further explained that the tanks were built by residents to store and distribute tanker water. In the run up to the 2013 general elections, however, PTI candidates for the national and provincial assemblies "surveyed" Samandar Colony and were shown the tanks as a way to alleviate potable water shortages. Once elected, the PTI lawmakers worked closely with party workers within the settlement to fill the tanks with free tankers. "We try to get a tanker every 15 days" Khalid said, admitting that this was not always possible.

When I asked families about this schedule, they argued the tanks were filled randomly. "It depends on their mood" grumbled Aadi, a shopkeeper who spent most of his days sitting outside his tiny establishment due to the lack of electricity. Like Aadi, residents claimed they had to wait months for a PTI tanker. They claimed tankers would arrive without warning or time to prepare, and that families were forced into a mad dash to get ahead in line. Moreover, not all residents were allowed to get water from a specific tank. Tanks at opposite ends of the settlement were to supply water to families living in

164

specific lanes. For many who lived in the middle of the settlement, these tanks were off limits.

Figure 5.2: Residents distribute water from an awami tank (photo by author)

But, while the tanker schedule was random in 2017, by 2018 it was far more common. The PPP had constructed a tank midway between the two PTI tanks and was filling it daily in the run up to elections. Mahsib, the PPP worker responsible for securing the tankers admitted that there were other parties also distributing water in this fashion. "But the PPP gives water on an almost daily basis," he explained. Once again, residents were far more skeptical of the party line. "This is *dhikawa* [showmanship]" said Pandey, a local resident when I asked why the tank had been built. Late one night in July 2018, we sat under a loud fan in Pandey's two bedroom home. He had just gotten off work at the port, but was patient enough to answer my questions. Typically, our conversation began by discussing elections and water. Soon, Pandey was criticizing a reverse osmosis plant

built by the PTI in a different segment of Samandar Colony.[101] "You see it now and it is completely garbage", he continued: "It barely ran for a month. I myself went and filled gallons for my own house from there. It was supposed to clean salty water, but it was just for show [*dhikhawa*]." I asked Pandey to elaborate:

> Me: You said the plant is for *dhikhawa*? What does that mean?
> Pandey: The PTI people put up the tank to show those houses that they're doing something for water. They *made* the plant. But if you put that water in a glass and it is not possible to drink, then what is the point of the plant? If you are getting Rs10 lakhs, and you are spending only 5 lakhs on the plant, then you may as well give that money to the poor. Give someone Rs5, 000, give someone Rs10, 000. What is the point of wasting all that money [on the plant]? You've put up a machine, a water tank, a roof, walls, taps; how much money do you think they spent on that? A lot right? Now see what they've done here [in Hindu Para]. First, they used to give water every other day with this [*awami*] tank. Most people that rent here are from interior Sindh. The PTI said to them, let's go in a *jalsa*.[rally]. Some people went, and some didn't. The people who stand in line to get water from the tank, not one of them went in the *jalsa*. So, they shut the water. The PTI said, you didn't come in the *jalsa* so why should we give you water?
> Me: But then what did the people say?
> Pandey: Nothing. The poor can't say anything. I'm usually on duty, but when I come home I try to see what is happening. One day I came home and asked my son if they gave the water and he said no. When I asked, they told me people didn't go in the *jalsa* so they shut the water. I said: what kind of system is this? If you go in the *jalsa* you get water, if you don't go in the *jalsa* you don't get water? This is not right. If you're giving water, then give it constantly. We voted for you.

Panday's (and for that matter Aadi's) disgust with parties like the PTI is, by no means, uncommon. Many of Hindu Para's residents see elections as replete with instances of party workers blithely supplying (and indeed withholding) goods like water for votes. As such, the case of Hindu Para's *awami* tanks shows that elections are times when patron-client networks (in which material goods are traded for votes) are activated. Indeed, Panday's description of *awami* tanks as a kind of showmanship rather than sincere support ["*dhikhawa*"] sheds light on an understanding of elections as temporal instances where goods like water can be secured. While party workers like Khalid and Mahsib spoke of their work as a commitment to provide water in a low-

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[101] This was not the reverse osmosis plant attached to Samandar Station as discussed in chapter four. Instead, it was a stand along plant constructed within pumping zone 1 of the settlement.

income settlement, residents described such efforts as electioneering strategies aimed at securing votes.

The Work of Settlement

Elections in Samandar Colony always were and continue to be about exchanges of votes for services, jobs, and other goods. This was the case when I visited Samandar Colony in 2017, a full year before the general elections, in 2018 when campaigning for the upcoming polls was in full swing, and, as residents explained, throughout the settlement's history. Throughout this period, Samandar Colony's families voted for *barāy* who had provided particularistic benefits in the past, or continued to promise such benefits in the future. But while these exchanges might initially be perceived as instances of vote-buying, the incremental material improvements Samandar Colony's residents hope to make to their own lives by continuing to take part in patronized elections signifies a broader effort for urban inclusion. Indeed, closer attention to the accounts of residents like Lalitha Aunty and Madhu shows that exchanging votes for tangible goods like potable water, sanitation, and jobs is about demanding a right to live in the city itself. Contextualized in the precarious, often reversible histories of ongoing settlement where potable water, working sanitation networks, and communal security signify the ability to live a decent life, it is clear that Samandar Colony's residents articulate their desire to live in Karachi at the very site of precarity; through demands for the very material entitlements that make the work of settlement possible. As Lalitha Aunty explained:

> Because we're voting for our *barāy*! They should take care of the poor, shouldn't they? If they want to live in comfort then they should realize we want at least some comfort too. They should at least give us water. They should fix our roads. They should fix our gutter lines. That is very big for us. The day these things happen I will hand out sweets because our area will have become very nice! People pray for rain but we worry about how to make their way through dirty water, hiking up their *saris*, and taking the long way round. We pray it rains everywhere in Karachi except in [Samandar Colony] [laughs]. Now you tell me, whose fault is all this? The government's, isn't it? If there were good roads,

working sewerage lines, if we got water and a little bit of rain didn't create puddles of dirty water, then everyone would send their blessing to the government for making our lives better.

At the same time, while many residents of Hindu Para claim that, as caretakers and sincere patrons, *barāy* are responsible for providing these material benefits, they also hold a cynical view of elections as instances when political parties engage in, at times, amoral electioneering strategies. Indeed, the case of Hindu Para's *awami* tanks shows that residents are often skeptical of election promises and that contestation and negotiation goes both ways; much like residents can withhold votes, party workers and candidates can withhold providing benefits if not supported at the ballot. Despite this, voting remains an important practice in Karachi's Samandar Colony. For instance, when I asked Aadi, a local shopkeeper, why people vote in circumstances in which outlandish campaign promises (such as 24-hour potable water) are unlikely to be met, he explained that voting ensured at least a temporary improvement in terms of material-well-being: "Now days we ask our *barāy*, will you give us water for two months or six months?" he shrugged.

As a temporal, institutionalized moment of political action, elections are thus times when Samandar Colony's residents can make direct demands for material and particularistic benefits. Elections are also times when political parties become attentive to the needs of the communities they represent, activating the networks of material exchange that garner them votes. But, rather than being instances where votes are bought or otherwise mechanically exchanged for particularistic benefits like jobs, street lights, and water, elections (including the months before the ballot itself) are an altogether brief window in which Karachi's urban poor put formal institutions to work for themselves. As the preceding sections show, elections, unlike other moments, are times when residents can bring their elected officials to the negotiating table and force the latter to engage with them as they seek to carry out, however briefly, the work of settlement; of

securing water, clean living environments, and decent jobs. As Madhu explained when I asked him what his expectations were from the upcoming 2018 General Election: "We'll see who works for us. When the time for elections comes, you see everyone around. They come to your houses."

And yet, *directly* exchanging votes for urban services and other material is not the only way Karachi's urban poor utilize elections to their benefit. In analyzing the rise of a unique, right-wing party in the TLP below, the remainder of this chapter explores how residents of a small community in Samandar Colony known as Katchi Para found ways to *indirectly* make these very claims during Pakistan's 2018 General Election.

Interlude: Rise of the TLP

> We have emerged as the third largest party in the by-polls in Lahore and elsewhere. And we have accomplished this not by promising paved streets or drains, but by committing ourselves to fight for *Khatm-i-Nubuwat.*

> - TLP Leader Zubair Kasuri. (quoted in Jamal, 2018)

In 2016, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer was murdered by his bodyguard Mumtaz Qadri in broad daylight. Taseer was murdered for speaking in defense of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman who had allegedly insulted the Holy Prophet Muhammad.[102] The Tehreek-e-Labbaik Ya Rasool was a deeply reactionary movement emerging in response to the perceived injustice behind Qadri's conviction and eventual hanging for the

murder. This movement, which advocated the sanctity of the Holy Prophet Muhammad above all else and the protection of Pakistan's strict blasphemy laws, established the TLP as its electoral wing in 2017. Contesting in Punjab's 2017 by-elections, the TLP gave a

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[102] A legacy of British Colonialism, Pakistan's blasphemy law seeks to protect recognized religions from public insults. With President Zia's aggressive Islamization of Pakistan's legal and civil institutions in the 1980s, however, the blasphemy law tends to favor perceived insults against Islam more than any other religion. Indeed, the Pakistan Penal Code, the country's criminal code, specifically defines insults to the Holy Prophet as blasphemy punishable by death..

surprisingly good showing when it received 7,000 votes in a PML-N stronghold. But the TLP's watershed moment came in November 2017 when it organized a sit-in close to Islamabad against a controversial change to Pakistan's election law. Led by Khadim Husain Rizvi, a religious preacher whose personal history was shrouded in mystery, the TLP demanded Law Minister Zahid Hamid's removal over a clause in the 2017 Election Bill which changed the phrase "I swear" to "I believe" in an oath declaring the Holy Prophet Mohammad as the final messenger of Allah. After three weeks of the sit-in, police and army crackdowns led to protests across Pakistan, culminating in criticism for the ruling PML-N and the law minister's resignation.

Less than a year later, the TLP was unable to convert this momentum into victories in Pakistan 2018 general election. Despite considerable street power backing candidates across Pakistan in both national and provincial constituencies, the TLP only won two seats in the Sindh Provincial Assembly – both of which represented urban constituencies in Karachi. The party did not win any seats in the constituencies that make up Samandar Colony. These results are presented in tables 5.1 to 5.4 which are compiled with data collected from the Election Commission of Pakistan. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show the TLP's results in select provincial and national constituencies of Karachi (discussed below). Tables 5.3 and 5.4, including both the TLP and other parties, correspondingly present the vote counts and percentages in the provincial and national assemblies that make up Samandar Colony. With just two electoral wins, it is clear that the TLP failed to secure a significant voice in Pakistan's lawmaking bodies. Yet, when the party's performance is assessed according to its ability to secure votes, the TLP's 2018 election results show that it made significant inroads in Karachi constituencies long considered strongholds of larger, mainstream parties like the PPP, PTI, MQM, and PML-N. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 assess the TLP's popularity according to an expanded set of criteria that includes whether the party secured a minimum of 10,000 (provincial) or 20,000 (national) votes in a given

constituency; and whether the TLP candidate was among the top three vote getting contenders in each constituency.

Constituency	Win/Loss	10,000 votes+?	Top 3?
PS-92	L	N	Y
PS-93	L	Y	Y
PS-94	L	Y	Y
PS-95	L	Y	Y
PS-96	L	Y	Y
PS-105	L	Y	Y
PS-106	L	N	Y
PS-107	W	Y	Y
PS-109	L	Y	Y
PS-110	L	Y	N
PS-113	L	N	Y
PS-115	W	Y	Y
PS-117	L	Y	Y
PS-118	L	N	Y
PS-119	L	Y	Y
PS-124	L	Y	Y
PS-126	L	Y	Y
PS-127	L	Y	Y

Table 5.1: TLP Sindh Provincial Assembly results in Karachi

Constituency	Win/Loss	20,000 votes+	Top 3
NA-239	L	Y	Y
NA-240	L	Y	Y
NA-241	L	N	Y
NA-245	L	Y	Y
NA-246	L	Y	Y
NA-247	L	Y	Y
NA-249	L	Y	Y
NA-251	L	Y	Y
NA-252	L	N	Y
NA-253	L	Y	Y
NA-254	L	Y	Y
NA-255	L	Y	Y

Table 5.2: TLP National Assembly results in Karachi

Based on these criteria, the TLP's performance is far from insignificant. For instance, of the 38 provincial assembly seats in Karachi, the TLP met at least one of the three

criteria in 18 constituencies (table 5.1). Of the 18 national assembly seats in Karachi, the

party succeeded on at least one of the three criteria in 12 constituencies (table 5.2).

Support for the TLP during the 2018 elections, as measured by these criteria, is unique

for several reasons. Unlike other religious parties which relied on creating broad

coalitions to secure the religious vote, the TLP emerged alone as an Islamic political

party with considerable street power in low-income, working class neighborhoods of

Karachi.[103] That the TLP came from the Barelvi sect of Islam made the party's broad

appeal across a politically, religiously, and ethnically diverse Karachi even more

distinctive. This is because core practices in the Barelvi sect – such as directly

worshipping the Holy Prophet Muhammad and venerating both dead and living saints –

were tantamount to the sin of shirk (polytheism) in mainstream Islam.[104] Yet, the party

secured votes and a leading position in many of Karachi's multi-sectarian constituencies.

Though the TLP did not achieve any electoral victories in Samandar Colony, it did

secure at least one of the three criteria described above in three out of four of the

settlement's provincial and national constituencies. For instance, in the two provincial

assemblies, the TLP secured over 10,000 votes in PS-110 and third position (with 8,911

votes) in PS-113. In NA-247, the TLP secured both 20,000 votes and second place in

NA-247. It was only in NA-248 that the party failed to secure the national assembly

threshold of 20,000 votes and came in fourth. Beyond winning and losing, these criteria

provide a nuanced way to assess the party's performance. For instance, that the TLP

secured 10,000 votes in a provincial constituency where the margin between second and

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[103] Scholars of democratization argue that President Musharraf relied on religious party coalitions like the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) to break the influence of traditional parties like the PPP and PML-N and secure the support of middle-class voters in Karachi (see Misra, 2003; Nasr, 2004; Talbot, 2003). Coalitions like the MMA were successful because of establishment support as well as a desire to secure the religious vote under one large umbrella. But, as pundits and experts note, the TLP's success as a grassroots party campaigning on a single belief made its success very different from that of the religious coalitions in the past (see Chaudhry, 2018; Faiz, 2018; Husain, 2018)

[104] For instance, Behuria (2008) argues that rifts existed between Barelvi beliefs and other extremists sects such as the Deobandi since colonial times.

third place was under 4,000 votes, and where the margin between third and fourth place was less than 800 votes is a mark of its popularity. Moreover, in constituencies where the total number of candidates was 20 (PS-110); 18 (PS-113); 23 (NA-247); and 12 (NA-248) it is remarkable that TLP routinely secured a top five position – often beating out established parties like the MQM, PML-N, and PPP to do so. Taken together, these criteria suggest that although the TLP did not win, it enjoyed considerable support in Samandar Colony.

Party	Position	Votes secured/Total	Percentage
PS-110			
PTI	1	38,878/236,665	16.4%
PPP	2	14,046/236,665	5.9%
MQM	3	11,951/236,665	5%
TLP	4	11,165/236,6652	4.7%
PS-113			
PTI	1	18,685/147,904	12.6%
PPP	2	14,967/147, 904	10.1%
TLP	3	8,911/147, 904	6%

Table 5.3: Provincial Assembly results in Samandar Colony

Party	Position	Votes secured/Total	Percentage
NA-247			
PTI	1	91,020/543,964	16.7%
TLP	2	24,680/543,964	4.5%
MQM	3	24,146/543,964	4.4%
NA-248			
PPP	1	35,124/303,258	11.5%
PTI	2	34,101/303,258	11.2%
PML-N	3	20,732/303,258	6.8%
TLP	4	12,797/303,258	4.2%

Table 5.4: National Assembly results in Samandar Colony

Of course, support for the TLP does dampen the wins or considerable vote percentage of other parties. Indeed, reading tables 5.1 through 5.4 in this way might amount to associating votes for the TLP as evidence of an electoral revolution – something that the election commission data does not indicate at least in the wake of the

2018 general election. But, the party's vote percentages and positions nevertheless signify that the TLP was a popular choice in Samandar Colony. This is especially significant given that the TLP's campaign of *Khatm-i-Nubuwat* stood in direct contradiction to that of more established political parties that sought votes by providing particularistic benefits such as water. In what follows, I demonstrate that support for the TLP might be understood in terms of the same issues – of water, sanitation, and housing – that have characterized electoral politics in Samandar Colony throughout the settlement's history. In addition to directly exchanging votes for particularistic benefits, then, support for the TLP shows how Samandar Colony's residents also *indirectly* make claims to these benefits and, by extension, continue to pursue the work of settlement during the temporally bounded moments of elections.

"Everything else will fall into place"

On my very first trip to Katchi Para in June 2018, I found myself in the home of Daudi Sahib, a former Karachi Municipal Corporation worker. At first, Daudi Sahib's family was suspicious of my presence. Their guarded nature, though intimidating, was not surprising; it was election season and homes in Samandar Colony were routinely invaded by political party workers promising many wondrous things like water and money. Households across the settlement had expressed to me their annoyance with workers showing up unannounced at their doorsteps with plates of warm *biryani* [a mixed rice dish], making promises to provide water and jobs. But once Daudi Sahib's family learnt that I was not affiliated with a political party, they acquiesced to answering my questions. Soon, I was drinking tea in a small room packed with around 15 men, women, and children. Ahmed, Daudi Sahib's son and an ex-councilor, described himself as a former long-time worker of the PML-N. Offering what he called the "inside view" [*andar ki baat*] on the party's machinations, Ahmed described how workers and candidates would

ratchet up efforts to provide water and other urban services as elections drew near. Indeed, Ahmed claimed this was common across all political parties in Samandar Colony including the PPP, PML-N, MQM, and MMA. Ahmed explained: "They [party workers; candidates] only come to us during elections, and then we don't see their faces for five years!" Members of Daudi Sahbi's family muttered in agreement as he continued: "If we ask why things are so bad after elections, why we don't get what was promised to us, our councilors say our votes have been bought. They think giving water and food during elections means buying our votes. They think providing for us after elections is a choice."

Like many others, Daudi Sahib's family described elections as moments of contestation in which residents and party workers sought to secure material benefits and secure votes respectively. But, whereas residents in other parts of Samandar Colony were debating which of the established parties would offer the most for their votes (see above), households like Daudi Sahib's expressed their support for a newcomer. Indeed, the TLP had a growing presence in Katchi Para unlike other parts of Samandar Colony, and its regular corner meetings and rallies were quickly drumming up support. When I asked Daudi Sahib's family what made the TLP different from all the other parties in Katchi Para, they emphasized the former's message of religiosity and morality. This desire to vote on the basis of religious belief was repeated in many of the subsequent interviews I conducted in Katchi Para. In one noteworthy instance, for example, Anya, an old widow and her niece Momina, explained that the TLP would introduce broader Islamic principles in the work of government. Indeed, Anya and Momina argued that support for religious morality was far more important than the particularistic benefits, such as water and jobs, offered by other political parties:

> Me: You'll vote for the TLP even if they don't give you water?
> Anya: Yes. Because it is *labbaik ya Rasullaulah* [the time of the Holy Prophet]

175

Momina: Meaning that if some party worker says they will give us water, that they will give us a new line, that they will give us jobs, even then we will vote for the [TLP]. We'll tell them to their face we will vote for the [TLP]. Whether they win or lose, whether our votes our wasted or not we will vote for them. Everyone is saying that he [Khadim Husain Rizvi] is good, that he will bring Islamic principles back [*deeni Islam*]. All the women will have to wear burkas. See, they [TLP] haven't tried to convince anyway to vote for them by making them greedy for water or jobs [*laalach nahi di hai*]. All [Rizvi] has spoken about is respect and religion. So people want to vote for him. You must have seen all his posters up in our areas. Before you came here he came to our street. There were cameras and TV people there too. All the men made arrangements for his food and transport and he gave a speech too. They prepared a lot for him. It's not allowed for us to take part because women are not allowed. There were lots of men. But we were allowed to go to the roof to listen to his speech.

Based on Momina's explanation, it is easy to conclude that support for the TLP is a product of religious belief. Certainly, it would be a mistake to argue that Islamic values played no role in this electoral choice – after all, many families I spoke to were, in appearance, pious, hardworking Muslims. However, attributing the TLP's popularity in Katchi Para to religious beliefs alone would miss how residents like Momina situate their preferences in a wider critique of Samandar Colony's electoral politics. For instance, when I asked Momina and Anya if they would vote for the TLP even if the party didn't supply them water, I had unwittingly asked why residents would consider supporting an outfit which, unlike others, was not purchasing votes by providing or promising to provide particularistic benefits. Yet Momina took my question as an opportunity to explain how different the TLP was compared to other political parties. It was precisely because the TLP did *not* attempt to garner votes by "making them greedy for water or jobs [*laalach nahi di hai*]" that Momina claimed she and others supported them. Indeed, throughout my interviews in Katchi Para in 2018, residents rationalized their support for the TLP in religious terms *and* because the party did not promise or actively provide particularistic benefits like water, jobs, and money – because it did not engage in vote buying. Residents thus perceived the TLP as offering something genuinely different in a system of elections based on exchanging votes for material goods. In this respect,

Momina's comments make it possible to see the TLP's popularity as more than a vote to be heard, a vote against the corrupt, and a vote on the basis of religion. Precisely what a vote for the TLP means is elaborated in the following exchange I had with two TLP supporters in June 2018:

> Me: What will happen in the elections?
> Tanveer: For now, everyone is dishonest. Not one person is good. Whoever will be elected this time, it's their responsibility. But I can't say anything because my party is the TLP and our goal is to get them elected. Why? Because they haven't promised us water. They haven't promised us electricity. They haven't promised us anything. All they have said is when the *deen* [religion] is corrected then we'll get everything else. The dishonest people in the assembly, for example, they're saying don't announce the call for prayer on the mosque's loudspeaker. Why? Where is the law against this? Now look at Majib, he's a PPP worker that was promised a job. Ask him if he got anything. He's got files and files but all the benefit has gone to the relatives [of the PPP councilors].
> Me: Who do you think is responsible for this?
> Tanveer: The MPA. It's his fault. Now, let me tell you. If he [the MPA] wins an election, he gives responsibility to some helpers. He gives them money to get work done. If he gives them money but doesn't check where that money was spent, then he did wrong.
> Me: You're saying MPAs should check whether the work is done?
> Tanveer: Yes, because he is responsible [*zimidar*].
> Me: Responsible? What does responsibility mean?
> Tanveer: If you're running a house, you know how much money you're getting, how much you need to spend on your home, and how much you need to keep for yourself. This is your responsibility. If you keep all the money for yourself then it's not right is it? This is what happens here; all they [*baray*] care about is taking money meant for the poor. We'll invite you to one of our party's [TLP's] rallies. You'll see that they won't make any promises about water, gas, electricity, or houses. All they'll talk about is *deen* [religion]. Then you listen to the other parties and see what happens. Some of the things they say at these rallies… There was a time in the last elections when a PPP candidate was giving a rally. One of his supporters was addressing the crowd. They were both drunk. You know what he said? He said vote for – I won't say his name [the PPP person] – and you'll go to heaven. What's the basis of this? We're sick of false promises. And another thing, these parties also make residents fight with each other.
> Me: Fight, how so?
> Tanveer: For instance, all the parties are having their rallies close to each other. Now, what happened? Some person from one of the parties throws money into the air – not his own, the party's – and others start copying him. The crowd comes onto the road and a fight inevitably begins. They make us fight like this. We have faith in Allah that this party [TLP] will not do any such thing. Why? Because all they talk about is faith and religion. There's no dancing, no alcohol, no mischief. You come to their office and you'll get knowledge and education. You go to another party's office and you'll get alcohol. Where should you go? You need to look at your faith, don't you? We're going to try to get them elected to both the national and provincial assemblies because the issue is now about

religion… We have faith in god that the TLP will win. And you'll see their work for yourself. They'll do it all in front of you. We've made them promise. They have to work for us.

While Tanveer described his electoral choice as an "issue of religion", he also claimed that the TLP would "work" for the community.[105] In terms of the latter, Tanveer argued that the party would fulfill its "responsibility" of providing for the settlement's material needs. Tanveer therefore did not see the TLP's unmaterialistic message as separate from the settlement's ongoing concerns over things like potable water, sanitation, and development. Rather, it was precisely because the TLP had made elections an "issue of religion" that Tanveer claimed they could promise with credibility the very material benefits other parties could not. Tanveer's comments show that support for the TLP, like support for any other political party or patron, cannot be decontextualized from Samandar Colony where material needs, and in particular access to water, remain significant precisely because these issues have *always* been crucial in the ongoing and precarious work of settlement. Rather, Tanveer argued that the way to secure the settlement's material needs lay not in exchanging votes for particularistic gains, but in religion ("once the religion is corrected then we'll get everything else"). Tanveer's comments show that while the TLP's promises are ethereal, vague, and unmaterialistic, Katchi Para's residents actively make them about concerns over the very same material needs that have always concerned them, albeit *indirectly* ("you'll see the work for yourself.").

In Samandar Colony's Katchi Para, the TLP's popularity says less about religious beliefs (as deeply held as it may be) and more about the ways in which residents actively respond to structures of precarity during the all too brief moment of elections. Presented with this temporally bounded, institutionalized opportunity for political action in 2018,

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[105] "Getting things done" is central to how democracy functions in the South Asian context (see Berenschot, 2014; Björkman, 2014a, 2014c. 2015). Here, I draw attention to how getting things done remains an important, if not crucial concern in electoral politics even in the absence of explicit exchanges of votes for particularistic gains.

Katchi Para's residents not only received the TLP's vague message through the lens of their everyday precarity, they actively appropriated its campaign promises and redeployed it in efforts to solve their persistent problems of potable water shortages, unemployment, and unsanitary living conditions. The fact that the TLP's single point campaign of *Khatm-e-Nubuwat* was so vague is precisely the reason why Katchi Para's residents modified it as a way to secure the urban inclusion they desired. As I left Daudi Sahib's family that night in June 2018, I asked why residents of the area were supporting a party like the TLP. Daudi Sahib himself responded: "As far as our party is concerned, we don't want any electricity or water or anything. All we want is *Nizam-i-Mustafa* (the system of the Prophet Muhammad). Once we have that, everything else will fall into place."

Conclusion: Reclaiming the City

In Karachi, when the banal, invisible work of settlement overlaps with elections, the once "capricious state" (Ahuja and Chhibber, 2012: 3) suddenly becomes attentive to the whims of the urban poor. In Samandar Colony, this means that elections are a time when officials can simultaneously be held accountable for their past work and also called upon to address everyday concerns. Before visiting the ballot box, residents call on incumbents and elected officials alike to provide water (potable or otherwise), enact development works, or give jobs. But, while Samandar Colony's residents certainly negotiate the "price" of their vote, their actions cannot be described as instances of vote-buying alone as often assumed by theories of liberal democratic politics (Kitschelt and Wilkinson; 2007). Instead, these exchanges signify conscious attempts to reduce everyday precarity, however briefly. As such, elections are times when Karachi's urban poor more broadly articulate their place as residents of the city.[106]

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[106] As James Holston argues (2008, 2009) access to water, sanitation, housing are unique sites for struggles over the modern city itself. The ability to live decent lives with the otherwise taken-for-

But, in Katchi Para, a small community within Samandar Colony, families articulate their claim to Karachi, not through direct claims for urban services, but by supporting the distinctly unmaterialistic, even ephemeral message of a religious party. In making this argument, I seek to show how the TLP's message – while predicated on Islamic fundamentalism, authoritarianism, and the *exclusion* of religious minorities – is appropriated by residents to articulate the same basis for urban inclusion in new ways. To be sure, the material requirements of settlement – water, sanitation, jobs, and security – are perpetual concerns for Samandar Colony's residents. But, in supporting the TLP during the 2018 elections, some residents utilized a new vernacular with which to make claims to these particularistic benefits. Rather than negotiating an explicit price for their votes, Katchi Para's residents made their own the TLP's otherwise vague and exclusionary idea of religious morality and redirected it towards their settlement needs. Read in this light, Samandar Colony's nascent support for the far-right TLP points to the many ways in which the poor claim "the space of the city their own again" (Purcell, 2014: 142) at the opportune moments of elections. Though temporally bounded, elections are nevertheless formalized instances of political action which Karachi's residents creatively deploy to counter, however briefly, their everyday precarity.

granted services of modern cities is thus an important metric for urban inclusion that Samandar Colony's residents recognize as such.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

> As the process of control becomes a question of achieving the continuous appearance of structure or order, there suddenly appears an equally continuous threat: the problem of 'disorder'. Disorder now emerges as a natural and inevitable liability, requiring a constant vigilance. Disorder though, like order, is a notion produced in the distributive practices themselves. It is only now that it appears as an ever present threat.

> - Timothy Mitchell (1988: 79)

In January 2020, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led Government of Sindh introduced a draft act to establish the Sindh Urban and Regional Master Plan Authority. The authority is expected to replace Karachi's Master Planning Department which has, under the jurisdiction of either the provincial or city government, drawn up master plans for Karachi since 1957. PPP lawmakers argue that replacing the department with a new, independent authority is crucial step to standardizing planning practices not just within Karachi, but across the entire province of Sindh. Said Sindh Local Government Secretary Roshan Ali Shaikh: "The authority [will] work independently with a separate director-general in all regions of Sindh and having its headquarters in Karachi… The aim is to reformulate urban and regional lands and housing standards to provide improved conditions, particularly in urban areas" (Khan, 2020). But city officials and opposition lawmakers remain skeptical, claiming that the new authority will curb the powers of the Karachi mayor's office. This latest dispute between the provincial and city governments is part of the decades-long struggle to plan and govern Karachi. Provincial lawmakers and city officials have constantly clashed over how much autonomy to afford Karachi,

with the latter clamoring for more control over planning and municipal-level functions and the former constantly seeking to subsume these and other local government functions as part of the Government of Sindh (see Rid and Mustafa, 2018 for a historic overview). The controversy over the Sindh Urban and Regional Master Plan Authority is thus typical of the politicization of governance in Karachi. It represents yet another instance in a long history of bureaucratic contestation, poor governance, and ad-hoc administration that has come to characterize popular and scholarly understandings of the city as disordered, unplanned, and ungoverned (Esser, 2004; Davis, 2006; Gazdar and Mallah, 2013; Khan, 2017; Verkaaik, 2016).[107] Civil society activists, media narratives, and urban scholars argue that these and similar political struggles have left Karachi's planning history in shambles.

Refocusing the lens on urban planning as an empowered discourse, *Precarious Pipes* has looked beyond narratives of disorder and weak governance to instead examine the ways in which planning discursively produces "order" and "disorder" based on a privileged set of assumptions and with consequences for how state power is claimed and performed. While the lack of housing, poor provisions for service delivery, and decrepit infrastructures make Karachi an exemplary case of failed "high modernist" governance (Scott, 1998), this dissertation has argued that a consistent failure of rulers to meet the basic needs of the population such as water and sanitation – by effectively shaping the city's *built form* – is precisely the context that enabled the production of both order and disorder, as well as their respective roles in processes of urban development and governance. This has happened as planners, relying on "slum regularization and

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[107] For an important scholarly critique of this view, see Laurent Gayer's (2014) excellent work in which he argues that the persistent violence in Karachi means that the city is not governed by the state's monopolization of violence but through the unplanned dispersal of violence across multiple independent actors that keep a "game" in check. Gayer focuses specifically on the role of political parties, gangs, and other non-state actors who collectively keep the city from falling into chaos. In doing so, however, his notion of "Ordered Disorder" tends to support the idea that there is no semblance of top-down, systematic, and formalized rule in Karachi.

improvement", produced large segments of the city's space as simultaneously formalized yet informal; rationalized yet irrational; and legible yet haphazard. No longer were rapidly emerging urban spaces – in particular ad-hoc housing settlements – considered an existential threat to the planned city. Instead, they were now produced as "regularized" *katchi abadis* [impermanent settlements]; a unique kind of urban space – legible, standardized, and legalized no less – that were perceived to engender the sort of resilience and entrepreneurship integral to Karachi's transformation into a livable city. Not only did planners discursively produce order and disorder, they represented *both* as integral to governance in Karachi.

In both critical and policy-oriented scholarship on urban planning, order is too often thought of as a function of the degree to which a city's built form aligns with (or can be made to conform to) a plan, model, or otherwise abstracted mock-up that accentuates a desired physical layout. In turn, cities of the Global South (and some in the Global North) – with their shantytowns, "ghettos", favelas, and "slums" – are afforded monikers of unplanned and disordered precisely because they entail a seemingly insurmountable gap between idealized urban plans on one hand and a constantly changing and deeply imperfect reality on the other. Indeed, if one were to compare the 2007 Karachi Strategic Development Plan's goal to make Karachi a "A world class city and an attractive economic center with a decent life for Karachiites" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007: iv) with the city's present and rising unplanned housing settlements, encroached business areas, and congested thoroughfares, it would easy to see an instance of planning failure and, hence, disorder. However, if one observes how the city's physical space is discursively normalized as an inherent – albeit distinctive – part of Karachi's urban fabric, it is possible to see an altogether different kind of order at work. In this order, Karachi is fixed and represented as a *known* entity through maps,

master plans, legal documents, and other artifacts that actively codify, monitor, and document the city's rapidly expanding space.

Precarious Pipes has thus put forth the idea that rule in Pakistan's largest city, in as much as this means the ability to order and structure physical space – is not a function of the gap between a material reality and an abstracted, ideal-typical representation of what ought to be. Instead, it is what Timothy Mitchell (1988: 60) calls "an order that works by appearance." Representations of order in Karachi, in other words, are part of a power/knowledge nexus that reproduces seemingly obvious expressions of disorder – such as "unplanned" spaces, "slums", and "informality" – as examples of legible, governed social categories. In addition to making this argument, this dissertation has also made three additional claims relating to postcolonial state power and everyday politics in the preceding chapters, namely: 1) the reproduction of the state through empowered discourse; 2) urban "informality" as lived experience; and 3) the politics of appropriation. Below, I take each in turn.

Reproducing the "State"

Social science scholarship has criticized efforts to "bring the state back in" (see Evans et al., 1985) as a standalone that is conceptually distinct from society. For instance, in his influential works, Joel Midgal (1988; 2001) argues that states and societies are mutually constitutive of one another and collectively implicated in structuring everyday life. For Midgal, the state is not a fixed object that can be delineated in terms of a distinct set of actors, institutions, and processes. Instead, it is a social, spatial, and political "empirical reality" that is nevertheless actively created, maintained, and modified through meaning-

laden social practices and historicized subjectivities.[108] Moreover, in contrast to both positivists and constructivist perspectives, Timothy Mitchell (1991: 94) argues that the state is neither a fixed, objectively identifiable actor that controls society nor a subjective figment of discourse. Instead, it is a web of power relations that is experienced as a "metaphysical effect of practice that make such [state and society] structures appear to exist." These and similar critiques show that studying and understanding the "state" requires placing empirical focus on the processes through which the entity's perceived boundaries with society are drawn, redrawn, and enacted.

This approach is particularly useful in examining the militarily "overdeveloped" postcolonial state in South Asia (see Alavi, 1972; Daechsel, 2011) that, while in control of its borders, is still struggling to provide necessities like housing, water, and sanitation to a majority of its citizens. Given the central role of cities in regulating the globalized flow of goods, capital, and people (Sassen, 2013) *urban* processes of postcolonial state formation are thus highly significant in South Asia. Of particular importance are the various cultural, economic, and political logics through which cities are dichotomized into "formal" and "informal" spaces, practices, and relationships, often understood to mirror legitimate state or state sanctioned and illegitimate non-state spaces respectively. As Boudreau and Davis (2017: 152) write in a special issue on informality in *Current Sociology:* "dichotomization, that is, the discursive and ideological imperative to separate the formal and the informal, the public and the private, the traditional and the modern, or even the advanced and the backward" is one of the main mechanisms through which the modern state is "able to centralize legitimate authority at the expense of other forms of political authority (such as traditional chiefdom, urban guilds, or the like)."

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[108] Noah Coburn (2011), for instance, demonstrates how communities in the village of Istalif, Afghanistan create the idea of the state "as useful fiction" to promote social order even as state authorities fail to secure a monopoly on violence in an institutionally weak, war-ravaged context.

The idea that the state can define the "informal" as something that is uniquely pathological to itself (Scott, 1998) has given rise to two strands of urban scholarship. The first, which I address in the subsequent section, is that urban informality – in as much as this entails unregulated "social and culturally embedded frameworks of access and belonging" (Björkman, 2015: 6) – is a way for excluded populations to resist, contest, and otherwise subvert political authority (for instance, see Bayet, 2010; Chatterjee, 2004). The second strand sheds light on how the state actively extends its political authority by both creating distinctions between the formal/informal and seeking to formalize, regulate, or eradicate the informal.[109] For instance, colonial rulers in the past, in creating distinctions between formal potable water and informal non-potable water, gave racialized distinctions between the white colonizer and non-white native material form while also defining the ambit of political authority (Kooy and Bakker, 2008). In more recent times, postcolonial rulers have created categories like the "dirty slum" (Doshi, 2013; Ghertner, 2015; Soederberg, 2018; Wu, 2016) or the "illegal" water connection (Björkman, 2014b; Kooy, 2014) to identify certain social practices and physical spaces as needing rehabilitation, particularly in order to create the so-called world-class city. By creating these categories, state power not only defines what is outside its ambit of governance, but actively extends its political authority by targeting what is deemed "informal" as an object of intervention and correction.

The assumption in this otherwise important critical work is that rulers define what is unregulated by laws, codified procedures, and formal rules in order to circumscribe what is antithetical to a teleological process of development.[110] But in Karachi, "informal"

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[109] For instance, in his study of Lesotho, James Ferguson's (1994) shows how development discourses both de-politicize and strengthen state power by defining what is "undeveloped" and thus subject to intervention.

[110] In her recent work, Malini Ranganthan (2018) notes that "improvement" has constantly undergirded how colonial and postcolonial urban planners viewed and continue to view the Indian city of Bangalore. Though seemingly aimed at bettering the city through various urban redevelopment projects, improvement for Ranganathan is a project of liberal rule spanning over a

social and economic activity – while defined and presented as existing parallel to the state – is no longer considered a threat to urban redevelopment. Rather, in line with a shift in global development discourses during the mid-1970s, legislators, civil society activists, and planners have come to view "informality" – in particular, the work of local leaders and community-based organizations – as decisive in Karachi's transformation to a livable city. Chapter two, "Forecourt of the Nation" traced how this shift in thinking was codified through "regularization" policies in the late 1980s which, rather than advocating evictions and resettlement as had often been the case, sought to provide legal tenure and urban services to the city's growing ad-hoc housing settlements. Crucial to this process was the discursive production of "regularized" *katchi abadis* as unique forms of land use that were simultaneously "formal" *and* "informal" – existing as both part of and outside the state. This was most clearly articulated in the so-called "external/internal" development model (as described in the 1993 Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (Regularisation, Improvement, and Development) Regulations) which effectively demarcated specific developmental roles for state institutions – such as the Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, and various other municipal bodies – on one hand, and relational networks of community organization and grassroots development on the other. Subsequent master plans further entrenched the "external/internal" model of development, including the various roles expected of state and non-state actors. For instance, the 2007 Karachi Strategic Development Plan stated that: "While the government will make substantial investments in trunk infrastructure, the residents will be encouraged to improve their living conditions" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007: 66).

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century. Attempts to improve Bangalore through racialized, class-based, and market based reforms from 1890 to present, Ranganathan argues, successively justified one another in a constant cycle of betterment while enabling capitalist accumulation. Colonial rulers in South Asia, moreover, enacted a unique form of bio-politics by defining the racialized and cultural other as aberrant to the modernization process (McFarlane, 2008; Kooy and Bakker, 2008).

With planners continuing to endorse an external/internal logic of urban development, the construction of local community organizations or non-state, unregulated provisioning of urban services like water as "informal" is further incorporated into how official procedures are expected to work. More than highlighting a particular approach to urban redevelopment, then, chapter two demonstrated how the external/internal and formal/informal dichotomy, which planners once used to justify evicting "kutcha" [impermanent] settlements in order to make room for neatly organized "neighborhood units" (MRV, 1967: 114), has since been repurposed and integrated as part of a systematic system of governance in Karachi.

This did not occur with rulers defining the informal as a backward or undeveloped domain that needed to be targeted for rehabilitation. Rather, by highlighting the need for things such as a community's "human and material resources"[111], indigenous "social structures" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 1974: 33), and "internal development" (Government of Sindh, 1994: 9) in processes of urban renewal, Karachi's planners since the mid-1970s framed informality as a legible – and *legitimate* – form of social practices in and of itself. But the Government of Sindh's approval of informality amounted to more than creating special allowances or "zones of exception" for unplanned areas.[112] Instead, in Karachi the "informal sector" as it is often described in planning documents is an abstracted social category created by planners in order to conceptualize and render legible different kinds of human activity – much like rulers historically created scientific abstractions, such as economic growth, public health, development, and, more recently, urban "resilience" (see Braun, 2014; Escobar, 2012; Foucault, 1991; Scott, 1998).

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[111] https://skaa.sindh.gov.pk/

[112] For instance, in his analysis of Jakarta's water reforms in the 1990s, Michael Kooy (2014: 48) has argued that Indonesia's New Order government actively prefers certain populations engage in informal practices and that, as such, informality is "a function of the historically mediated, political, process of development the state encourages." Yet, as Kooy also shows, while informal water access is encouraged in particular "zones of exception", the state nevertheless sees informality as abnormal to a cornerstone of urban modernity; the modern infrastructural ideal.

Informal relations and practices – or those practices that remain unregulated by codified rules and laws – are thus coopted and incorporated into how the state enacts its authority.

As such, the case of Karachi is indicative of how urban processes of state formation entail *de-dichotomizing* socially constructed distinctions between the so-called formal/informal, legal/illegal and developed/undeveloped and creating new social categories in ways that contradict a straightforward teleological process of modernization. In Karachi, the "regularization" of unplanned areas as *katchi abadis* that are simultaneously formal and informal; unplanned and legal; and rationalized yet irrational (according to preexisting understandings of these constructed categories, no less) is emblematic of how new objects of legibility are constructed. Though the state may struggle to exert spatial authority, enact discipline, and infiltrate society through traditional means, it is nevertheless able to reproduce itself by discursively constructing and incorporating within its regulatory ambit distinct social categories – including those that seem antithetical to its own formalized domain.

This theoretical argument entails two further observations pertaining to how the modern postcolonial state functions. The first concerns an often-cited distinction between the strong "contractual" European or North American state that facilitates the needs of its citizens and the "predatory" weak postcolonial state as an extractive and coercive entity that caters to powerful groups like the military or political parties (de Wit, 1996).[113] As Ananya Roy writes (2003: 139) in her analysis of the Communist Party of India, states in the latter sense are replete with regulatory ambiguities resembling an "ensemble of everyday and extraordinary practices", many of which are not codified or proceduralized. As such, the predatory postcolonial state is inherently informalized for

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[113] See Holcombe (2020) for a fascinating restatement of this distinction in which the state embraces democratization in order to justify its predatory activities.

Roy, consisting of a continuous regime of actors that blur the lines between what is official and what is not (see also, Roy, 2009). Yet, while this may certainly be true in institutionally weak contexts such as Pakistan, chapter two shows that "informality" is not just a regulatory ambiguity that powerful actors can exploit to enact discipline and spatial control through extralegal and sometimes illegal means and actors. Instead, informality is *also* an official, conceptual category in and of itself that is part of the very knowledge/power nexus through which states, postcolonial or otherwise, seek to rule.

The second concerns the degree to which states are restructured in the face of post Washington Consensus-era market influence.[114] For instance, Bob Jessop (1996: 263-264) has argued that liberalization and globalization have entailed the "hollowing out" of the nation-state, entailing a shift from "government to governance" which includes "a set of quasi and non-state actors in a variety of state functions." As Roy (2003: 66) writes, however, Jessop's hollowed out state does not portend the dominance of markets, but "new regimes of regulation" that are characterized by the "the territorial and functional reorganization of state capacity". In Karachi, as market ideology over the past two decades has collided with continued advocating for *katchi abadis* as crucial to urban redevelopment, there has been a *retrenchment* of the state as an entity. For instance, the 2007 Karachi Strategic Development plan, in exploring how the external/internal model of urban development from the 1980s may be better implemented, advocates a role for "public-private partnerships" in such areas as housing and service delivery, going as far as to state that the "role of the private developers… in the informal sector needs to be further promoted by way of unstunted cooperation between the public sector agencies and the private developers" (Master Planning Group of Offices, 2007: 66). While informality here is conceptualized as part of market logic facilitating urban development,

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[114] There is also an ongoing debate in this vein regarding the retreat of the "developmental" state (Kim, 1999; Radice, 2008)

this logic also gives planners a new set of ideological tools with which to reinforce the discursive construction of *katchi abadis* as urban spaces that are nevertheless part of the formal state. Specifically, by recasting the "internal", community-level process of development as bottom-up, entrepreneurial activity, market logic discursively demarcates the respective roles of formal institutions and (now market-based) informal actors while keeping intact the external/internal development model.

Lived Informality

Scholars across a plethora of disciplinary boundaries have recognized the resilience of the urban poor in the face of state and market predation as a kind of agency. Engaging in an unregulated domain of "flexibility, negotiation, or situational spontaneity that push back against established state regulations and the constraints of the law" (Boudreau and Davis, 2017: 155), urban populations in both the Global South and North are able to make space for themselves in contexts that are, by most accounts, inhospitable toward their presence. As Hernando De Soto (2002; 2003) argues, these actions are an agentic response to burdensome regulations and weak institutions that lock the poor out of the global economy. Yet, such narratives are not only espoused by advocates of market hegemony such as De Soto. They are also central to postcolonial scholarship which sees the everyday strategies of urban populations to access housing, urban services, and livelihoods as akin to political acts of "subsistence" (Bayat, 1997, 2010; McFarlane, 2011) or full scale resistance and bottom-up democratization in the face of state and market exclusion (Appadurai, 2002; Benjamin, 2008).

Such scholarly perspectives on everyday politics are a welcome pushback against Eurocentric models of state formation and citizenship (North et al., 2009; Rotberg, 2003; Stewart, 2008). Indeed, a more positive assessment of informality as a domain of agentic

191

action has since taken root in development circles as well. For instance, a cursory glance at the United Nation's 2017 "New Urban Agenda" shows multiple references to "slum and informal-settlement dwellers" and the challenges they face in an urbanizing world. At the same time, the New Urban Agenda also recognizes how these populations contribute to and sustain formally regulated domains of economic and social activity. For instance, article 59 states that:

> We commit ourselves to recognizing the contribution of the working poor in the informal economy, particularly women, including unpaid, domestic and migrant workers, to the urban economies, taking into account national circumstances. Their livelihoods, working conditions and income security, legal and social protection, access to skills, assets and other support services, and voice and representation should be enhanced. A progressive transition of workers and economic units to the formal economy will be developed… We will take into account specific national circumstances, legislation, policies, practices and priorities for the transition to the formal economy.

The New Urban Agenda indicates that urban "informality" has shed its reputation as a social-ill that impedes economic, social, and political development.[115] This recognition has gone hand in hand with so-called slum legalization and improvement programs gaining prominence in development circles since the 1970s which seek to incorporate the urban poor's unregulated economic activities as part of public-private partnerships between state officials and grassroots actors. Such projects are grounded in the idea – promoted by development institutions such as the World Bank – that state-sanctioned institutions and actors, including both public and private, alone cannot address the needs of growing urban populations (see Cammett et al., 2014; Marin, 2009; van Horen, 2000). As such, grassroots actors and community based organizations are not only seen as pillars of support for the formal sector, but part and parcel of the development process given their ability to provide situated knowledge, facilitate infrastructure and service delivery projects at the local level, and make collaborative governance possible (see UN-

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[115] See, for instance, a 2004 report published by consultants McKinsey Global Institute that claims informality stifles and distorts market competition (Farrell, 2004)

Habitat, 2007; World Bank, 2017). For development practitioners, slum legalization and improvement, rather than top-down urban planning alone, is a tried, tested, and inclusive solution for urban inequality, particularly in weak institutional contexts besieged by urban growth.[116]

Perhaps the most well-known project of "slum-improvement" comes from Karachi itself. Beginning as a small-scale initiative to provide low-cost sanitation infrastructure to a collection of illegal settlements on Karachi's northeastern periphery, the Orangi Pilot Project gave rise to the "external/internal" model of development that was later codified in the 1987 Sindh Katchi Abadis Act (Bano, 2017). Since then, the OPP has gone on to become a world-renown model of grassroots development (Boyatzis and Khawaja, 2014; Sami, 2009; Satterthwaite et al., 2015; Zaidi, 2001). Over the course of three decades, the OPP has helped residents transform the settlement of Orangi Town from a peripheral territory devoid of government support, basic sanitation, housing, and access to water, to a thriving and livable urban area home to over 1.2 million people. Residents have worked with civil society actors, urban activists, and state institutions to establish low-cost housing, communally regulated water access, education, healthcare, family planning and micro-credit programs (Ahmed and Sohail, 2003; Hasan, 1995). While the OPP is a model in which civil society and the state play a critical role in providing technical support, its philosophy is based on the continued recognition of the role of informal community and grassroots actors in the development process::

> People build their houses incrementally… Initially the land supplier (who is a resourceful person having links with politicians, government departments and the private operators) arranges the supply of water through water tankers and transportation (i.e. bus routes). As the settlement expands and consolidates, need for water supply, sewage disposal, schools and clinics arises… People lobby with government for facilities but due to lack of or adhoc government response, they soon undertake self-help initiatives… OPP decided to strengthen people's initiatives with social and technical guidance. It is demonstrated through the programs that at the neighborhood level people can finance, manage and

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[116] For a recent scholarly critique of "slum upgrading" in the Global South, see Adama (2020)

maintain facilities like sewerage, water supply, schools, clinics, solid waste disposal and security. Government's role is to compliment people's work with larger facilities like trunk sewers and treatment plants, water mains and water, colleges/universities, hospitals, main solid waste disposals and land fill sites. The component-sharing concept clearly shows that where government partners with the people, sustainable development can be managed through local resources.[117]

The OPP is an ongoing example of how residents at Karachi's peripheries have relied on both formal and technical support *and* middlemen, political patrons, and community-based organizations to acquire land, housing, and urban services.[118] But, as informality becomes a buzzword for hitherto untapped potential in developmental circles (see Hasan, 2006), we are confronted with the important question of how to understand the actions of the populations who engage daily in unregulated economic practices, develop situated knowledge and unique skills, and generally make life possible by navigating both formal rules and everyday relationships such as kinship and friendship. I suggest this requires a methodological shift that looks at "informality" as more than just a tool of "critical analysis" in studying large-scale processes such as urbanization (see Banks et al., 2020 as a recent example). Instead, informality can also be explored as what Clifford Geertz (2001 [1985]) describes as an "experience-near" concept for social groups who make up and navigate messy, diverse urban political economies.[119]

As chapters three and four demonstrated, for some of Samandar Colony's residents, "informal" relations and practices that facilitate access to water created pervasive social,

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[117] "Brief situational analysis" http://www.opp.org.pk/

[118] It is important to note that like Partha Chatterjee's (2004) original class-based distinction between political and civil society, both developmental and scholarly perspectives are increasingly aware that "informality" exists in a symbiotic relationship with the "formal" actors. In other words, informality is not only conceptualized as a domain of practice in which state officials, bureaucracies, and civil society lay a significant role, such official actors are also implicated in patronage relations, unregulated economic practices, and other such practices (Anand, 2017)

[119] I build here on sociologist Mitch Duneier's (2002) infamous response to Loïc Waquant (2002) regarding the role of theory in ethnographic research. For Duneier, (2002: 1547), while theory plays a significant role in orienting the ethnographer, it involves a tradeoff between "using an in-depth description to enter into a dialogue with a theory versus telling readers only as much about people and places as they need to know to reconstruct in the role of theory in ethnographic research." For Duneier, while highlighting lived experiences does not eliminate this conundrum, it does allow "learning from the site" (Ibid: 1566) if theoretical concepts are actively interrogated with empirical data.

political, and financial marginalization. Chapter three showed that in a context where access to water is largely secured through unregulated economic exchanges with water vendors, this is not necessarily glorified as a "push back against established state regulations and the constraints of the law" (Boudreau and Davis, 2017: 155). Chapter three showed that, while seen as entrepreneurial stopgaps in large water distribution systems by development circles (Ayalew et al., 2014; Casey et al., 2006; Ishaku et al., 2010; Onyenechere et al., 2012; Vasquez at al., 2009; Whittington et al., 1991), water vending were attributed meanings of helping oneself ("*apni madat āap*") and making do ("*guzāra*") by Samandar Colony's residents. Such meanings, while indicative of purposeful coping mechanisms in the face of precarity, did not amount to instances of agency or everyday subversion. Indeed, these far less celebratory lived experiences of unregulated water access were captured in how residents describe Samandar Colony as an "*Allah waris*" community; a community "forsaken by god."

Chapter four, "Our Job is to Inform" further showed how councilors, big men, and political patrons created hydraulic uncertainty by constantly negotiating Samandar Colony's pumping schedules amongst themselves. While the *wari* [turn] system did ensure that all three of the settlement's pumping zones received bulk water from the Karachi Water and Sewerage board (KWSB), it was also subject to constant changes as influential local leaders worked with the KWSB machine operators to direct the flow of water. As the ongoing dispute between different pumping zones as well as the ad-hoc creation of a third zone in mid-2017 described in this chapter showed, the *wari* system was highly politicized for residents of Samandar Colony. Accusations of "valve politics" (*valve ki siyasat*) where local leaders were criticized for "playing politics on water" by distributing it unequally among different parts of the settlement were so common that KWSB machine operators were forced to demonstrate their "neutrality" in matters of water distribution. In juxtaposing ethnographically observed instances of negotiation between local leaders

with competing narratives of "valve politics" and "neutral work", chapter four thus demonstrated how the authority of local "informal sovereigns" (Hansen and Stepputat, 2006: 297) in this context reproduced lived experience of uncertainty for Samandar Colony's residents. Indeed, the uncertainty in everyday water access was so pronounced that accessing information about the settlement's bulk water supplies became part and parcel of accessing potable water.

As chapters three and four demonstrated, for many of Samandar Colony's residents the small-scale vending and the authority of local leaders – what development practitioners often describe as instances of "informality" – were associated with lived experiences of everyday precarity. In making this argument, I do not seek to discredit the considerable efforts of the urban poor across the Global South and North to live decent lives. Nor do I cast doubt on the significant gains made the OPP and similar projects in addressing structural urban inequalities. Nor, finally, do I suggest that increasing formalization as seen in, for example, large-scale urban redevelopment projects and slum demolitions do not *also* serve as significant sources of uncertainty. Instead, I seek to show how adopting an experience-near approach to the study of urban informality can both reinvigorate our understandings of so-called subaltern lifeworlds as well as help place them within larger processes of urban stasis and transformation. In Karachi, for instance, a focus on the meaning-laden nature of everyday "informality" shows that the city's poor not only understand their own precarity, but actively seek to work through it rather than opting for social mobilization and overt resistance.

This leads to an interpretation of everyday life in Karachi that cannot be described as subversive insurgency (Scott, 2000). Nor, however, should the lack of subtle acts resistance be read as a straightforward reproduction of structural abjection without contestation as scholars have argued to be the case in similar circumstances. For instance, in their analysis of "environmental suffering" in Argentina, Javier Auyero and Debora

Swistun (2009) argue that the lack of overt resistance despite ongoing pollution in shantytowns signals an internalization of hardship and misery in which people are unable to conceive of better living circumstances.[120] Indeed, in working to cope with their living circumstances, Samandar Colony's residents act purposively to address hardships beyond their control, even deploying the temporally-bounded, frantic, and institutionalized moments of elections towards alleviating their daily precarity.

Politics by Appropriation

Scholars are critical of Pakistan's democratic hopes despite the longest stint of successive civilian rule since 2008. For instance, a special issue of *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* devoted entirely to "Electoral Fraud and Manipulation in India and Pakistan" seeks to explore "fraud, violence and manipulation as a vernacular assemblage of practices, discourses and representations that shape and are shaped by local political histories" (Martin and Picherit, 2020: 3). As Paul Rollier (2020: 135) writes in this special issue, while powerful candidates at the polls can no longer employ "thuggish tactics" to garner votes, they nevertheless project their supremacy "symbolically and within the established idiom of modern political rituals." Others in the special issue argue that powerful political parties in Pakistan are able to infiltrate state apparatuses such as the police and other bureaucracies to force preferable electoral outcomes (Javid, 2020). Aside from these granular, ethnographic accounts, scholars who study Pakistan through the more common lens of civil-military relations argue that the successive turnover of civilian governments since 2008, while evidence of the military's reduced preference for coups, has nevertheless entrenched a tutelary regime (Samad, 2017). These and similar

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[120] See also Loïc Wacquant's (2008) account of "advanced marginality" in the United States and France in this vein.

studies point out that despite the regularity of voting over the last decade, elections in Pakistan are marred by practices that stand in the way of "true" democratization.

The idea that South Asian democracies are somehow deficient when compared to an ideal-typical, universalized view of electoral participation is a common critique of democratization in the region (see Chandra, 2006; De Witt, 1996; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Wilkinson 2006). Elections in South Asia (and other postcolonial contexts) are criticized for engendering undemocratic norms where votes are secured by providing short-term, materialistic and particularistic benefits rather than advocating specific kinds of social policy. The supposed "illiberal" nature of elections in Pakistan is by no means abnormal – even beyond the South Asian context.[121] Nevertheless, by exploring how powerful actors steer electoral processes, these studies either associate the rationality of the everyday voter with utility maximization or overlook it entirely in favor of exploring how the powerful reproduce their electoral victories (see Martin, 2020; Rollier, 2020 for recent examples of the latter in the context of Pakistan). By contrast, other studies of elections in the South Asian context show that seemingly transactional exchanges of votes for particularistic benefits such as water, jobs, and cash are spaces of meaning in which the urban poor take part to be "seen" by the state and experience their rights as citizens (Banerjee, 2011; Carswell and De Neve, 2014). Indeed, by posing the question of "why people vote" (see Banerjee, 2014) scholars have shown that elections are instances where social groups can engage in significant political performances (Straus and O'Brien, 2007).

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[121] In their introduction to the special issue of *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Martin and Picherit (2020) are careful to note that India and Pakistan are by no means countries where electoral manipulation and fraud is more common. Indeed, scholars working across the world have shown that elections have historically been subject to powerful actors seeking to manipulate outcomes through legal and illegal means (Alvarez et al., 2008; Brink-Danan, 2009; Coburn and Larson, 2014; Minnite, 2010). The normatively-charged language of "vote-buying" in the Global South (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007) which suggests that powerful actors purchase votes by providing short-term material benefits elides the fact that electoral manipulation in historically democratic countries works through legal means like gerrymandering and voter suppression (see Rhodes, 2017).

In this light, chapter five "The Prophet's Ballot" showed how elections – while not a space to debate different policies and social platforms – nevertheless provide a brief opportunity for Karachi's urban poor to express their deeply-held desire for a "right to the city" in a context of increasing political, social, and environmental uncertainty. Chapter five made this argument not only by highlighting how residents of Samandar Colony exchanged their votes for particularistic benefits like water and jobs, but also by exploring the surprising popularity of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in the 2018 general polls, a far right party that campaigned on a distinctly unmaterialistic and vague notion of religious morality to garner votes. For the former, while elections in settlements like Karachi's Samandar Colony have always been characterized by negotiations over material and particularistic benefits, these exchanges bely broader efforts by residents to make the constant, reversible work of settlement possible. Indeed, for residents, things like clean streets, reliable livelihoods, and access to potable water – however brief – are symbolic of their ability to live decent lives in Karachi. But chapter five also showed how residents of Samandar Colony *indirectly* laid claim to these resources and benefits and by extension their place in the city.

As chapter five further argued, support for the TLP could not solely be explained in terms of a pious, working class electorate expressing their religious preferences in a fundamentally altered electoral landscape (see Naseemullah and Chhibber, 2018a, 2018b).[122] Rather, it was situated in and emanated from the very material concerns – of water, sanitation, jobs, and security – that had always been characteristic of electoral politics in the settlement. Chapter five showed that families in Katchi Para voted for the TLP over other, more influential political parties because it was a way to *restate* their demand for the very same particularistic benefits that symbolized their capacity to live as

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[122] The role of religion, however, is not limited with class. For instance, in her fascinating work, Ammara Maqsood (2017) argues that the Pakistani middle class has solidified a sense of religious modernity that is simultaneously global and modern, as well as anti-secular.

deserving citizens of Karachi; a different means to the same end. Here, the garb of Islamic proselytization provided an alternative to direct exchanges of votes for benefits; as many residents claimed, the TLP would "work for them" – in the sense of providing these very benefits – if brought into power.

As such, chapter five also showed that the politics in this context was neither solely a story of informal, claim-making enacted through channels such as patronage or local grassroots organization (Appadurai, 2002; Chatterjee, 2004; Weinstein, 2008) nor class-based electoral mobilization in an altered electoral landscape (Naseemullah and Chhibber, 2018a, 2018b). Instead, Karachi's urban poor "made their own" the TLP's vague and dog whistle message of *Khatm-e-Nubuwat* [finality of the Holy Prophet] and redirected it towards their concerns for more reliable public service access, as well as jobs, and government support in general. Of significance here is not that the TLP was able to make inroads in a contested set of constituencies. Rather, it was that Samandar Colony's residents made their own the far-right party's religious message to *rearticulate* their deeply held desire to live less precarious lives. In doing so, Karachi's urban poor engaged in a form of electoral politics that can neither be understood as vote-buying or characterized as insurgent, direct vote-for-benefit politics on the other. Instead, *in addition* to the latter, the average TLP supporter in Samandar Colony engaged in appropriation – foregoing direct exchanges of votes for benefits in favor of indirect claims to state resources. Indeed, this was a story of pirating, plagiarizing, or otherwise taking over the discourses of more powerful actors and redirecting them towards predefined political possibilities. As Asher Ghertner (2015: 127) writes in his analysis of how "dirty" slum communities made a place for themselves in millennial New Delhi by coopting discourses of a world-class city: "To 'partake' means to participate, but it also means to 'take part', to makes one's own, or to appropriate" a dominant discourse or widespread

sensibility. In Karachi's Samandar Colony, residents did this by partaking in and making their own the growing discourses of Islamic piety during the 2018 general elections.

Precarious Pasts, Uncertain Futures

In June 2009, Asia Bib, a Christian farm laborer from Punjab was dragged out of her home by police, beaten by a mob, arrested, and charged with blasphemy under section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code. The events transpired after Asia Bibi was accused by neighbors of insulting the Prophet Muhammad in an argument. After she was found guilty and sentenced to death in 2010, Asia Bibi's case garnered considerable attention from international and domestic human rights groups arguing against the misuse of Pakistan's blasphemy law. When the Supreme Court of Pakistan overturned Asia Bibi's conviction in October 2018 the TLP's response was swift. In a Twitter post, party leader Khadim Husain Rizvi wrote:

> If Asia is found not guilty, despite her confession in public and before trial court, and [is] acquitted after 9 years, it can put a big question mark on the [court's] decision. It means there is something rotten in the [the] judicial procedure or there is some third umpire making decisions.[123]

A mere three months after securing a substantial number of votes in the general election, TLP leadership was calling on its supporters to clash with the state and kill the justices that had dismissed the case against Asia Bibi. Widespread protests gripped Pakistan over the next three days as TLP supporters blocked roadways in and out of major urban centers, protested in front of government buildings, and clashed violently with police. The federal government, meanwhile, attempted to placate the mob with Prime Minister Imran Khan pleading with the TLP not to incite violence. After three days of protests, the government and TLP came to an agreement in which arrested party workers were released and Asia Bibi was barred from leaving the country by being placed on Pakistan's

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[123] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/Asia_Bibi

Exit Control List. TLP top brass were arrested for inciting violence against the state but later released on bail.

While certainly the most publicized instance, Asia Bibi's case is far from the TLP's only foray into national level politics. Party supporters have also been implicated in other high-profile cases of alleged blasphemy, some of which have resulted in extra-judicial killings.[124] Beyond its continued pursuit of *Khatm-e-Nubuwat* [Finality of the Holy prophet] through extra-legal, often violent means, the TLP has also exerted its influence to force the federal government to sack ministers and advisors deemed disrespectful of the Prophet Muhammad – either by virtue of the official's political position or because of their adherence to specific sects of Islam. Indeed, since 2016, the TLP has shaped the ongoing national debate on the role of religion in Pakistan. The party has used its considerable street power and a variety of tactics such as electoral contestation, social mobilization, and violence against both state institutions and private citizens to demand that Sharia (Islamic) Law be implemented nationally through a process of social and political change. Funneling matters of state and society through the lens of blasphemy, the TLP is fast becoming the social media savvy face of right-wing populism in Pakistan.

But Pakistan is not alone in this regard. In recent years, populism has become a fixture of political contestation across the Global South and North (Aytaç and Öniş, 2013; Burack and Snyder-Hall, 2012; Casiple et al., 2016; Jaffrelot, 2015). Countries like India, the United States, the United Kingdom, Turkey, France, Hungary, and Brazil have all seen xenophobic, anti-immigrant, and anti-Semitic narratives enter mainstream politics. In his now widely cited paper *Why Populism*, sociologist Rogers Brubaker (2017) argues that the current populist conjuncture is a product of both structural changes in national governance as well as a set of globally connected developments that include

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[124] The TLP has been indirectly linked to at least two extra-judicial killings between 2018 and 2019. Both have involved students at Pakistani universities killing their professors for allegedly insulting Prophet Muhammad.

economic recession, the influx of refugees to the west, Islamic terrorism, and post-truth media practices. As Brubaker writes, leaders and other political actors have "*construed and represented* as crises" these events in order to stir up populist support (Ibid: 35, emphasis in original). Although Brubaker is careful to note that "crisis" is not a neutral descriptive term regarding the state of the world, he nevertheless argues that political actors cannot construct crises out of nowhere. As such, there is a link between events that can be framed as crisis and the rise of populist movements across the globe.

This dissertation began by describing the now widespread assumption that the world is undergoing an "urban crisis" fueled by rising urbanization and poverty. The link between *urban* crises and populist politics may therefore explain the TLP's electoral victories and hitherto non-existent political support in Karachi. Not only is Pakistan's largest city characterized by the unavailability of services, housing, and security, such uncertainty is further compounded by policies which encourage city and municipal institutions to shift their focus from the needs of the urban poor to the needs of the national economy. While politicians and planners push for Karachi to become a competitive "world-class city" whose primary goal is to attract capital investment (particularly in the real estate sector), urban activists tout self-help and grassroots development as tactics to overcome the structural inequality produced by, among other things, the very land speculation encouraged by policies that seek to attract capital.[125] These discourses not only responsibilize the urban poor for fostering their own urban inclusion by expecting them to invest time, money, and labor into bettering their living conditions, they also elide the material realities of abjection, marginalization, and neglect that increasingly afflict Karachi and arguably contribute to support for populist agendas promising change.

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[125] For journalistic accounts on the relationship between world-class city making and urban marginalization in Karachi, see (Anwar, 2019).

Yet, it is also true that the urban poor have inhabited Karachi as precarious citizens for much of the city's history. Indeed, the various crises that are said to affect Karachi – including those to do with affordable housing, solid waste management, water access, and public health – have a history that stretches all the way back to the British Raj and its othering of the city's indigenous populations.[126] While critics rightly point out how planning in the millennial age of the world-class city has had exceedingly negative impacts on the livelihoods and living conditions of the urban poor (Bhan, 2009; Ellis, 2012; Ghertner, 2015; Myers, 2015; Watson, 2009b), it is important to note that the ensuing insecurity is by no means new for urban populations. It is neither a recent historical development nor a special feature of the so-called developing world as inhabitants of Karachi, like those of other cities in the Global South and North have faced eviction, criminalization, environmental injustice, and racial/cultural profiling for decades.[127] I do not suggest here that the problems faced by various urban populations are not pressing or qualitatively different in contemporary times, especially given the exigencies of climate change. Rather, I seek to highlight how support for right-wing, populist agendas is not the product of a sudden "urban crisis" – at least in Karachi – but situated in a historical context of uncertainty that has increased over time and always been a part of the city's fabric. Historicized in this way, electoral support for the TLP is a double-edged sword; on the one hand, it shows how some of the world's most condemned populations continue to find creative ways to express their political preferences (amidst intolerable, historic, and ongoing alienation). On the other, as the TLP's rising influence in Karachi's urban and Pakistan's national politics indicates, it also

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[126] As Timothy Weaver (2017) argues, the notion of an "urban crisis" has been deployed to counter various structural, economic, and cultural changes in cities of the United States since the 1950s. For an excellent account of colonial engineer James Strachan's efforts to plan Karachi during the British Raj, see Damohī (2016).

[127] For recent urban scholarship that transcends the traditional theoretical and empirical boundary between the Global South and North see Anand et al. (2018), Edensor (2012), and Ranganathan and Balazs (2015).

shows that such agency has so far come at the cost of empowering political ideas based on extremist rhetoric.

This raises pressing questions about how the rhythms of urban life will adjust in response; will Karachi's poor continue to exist between the shifting dichotomies of formal/informal, legal/illegal, and planned/unplanned to protect the precious, reversible gains in settlement they have so far secured? Or, caught between dry pipes, broken electoral promises, and ambivalent bureaucracies, will they shatter the status quo by appropriating and (inadvertently or otherwise) giving voice to dangerous, violent, and absolutist discourses of change? *Precarious Pipes* does not offer a predictive answer to this question. Rather, it seeks to dissociate such questions with an underlying preoccupation with "new" crises to instead shed light on the deeply historicized and lived experiences that have not only led to the contemporary moment, but may actively shape urban futures.

APPENDIX: A

PLANNING ARCHIVE

CDGK: City District Government of Karachi (defunct)   JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency   WB: World Bank
GOP: Government of Pakistan   MPGO: Master Planning Group of Offices   UNDP: United Nations
GOS: Government of Sindh   KWSB: Karachi Water and Sewerage Board   Development Program

Number	Date	Text Name	Author	Document Type
1	1952	Greater Karachi Plan	Merz Rendell Vatten	Master Plan
2	1952	Water and Sewerage Problems Greater Karachi	Harland Bartholomew	Third Party
3	1962	The Greater Karachi Resettlement Program	MPGO	Policy
4	1969	Master Plan for Karachi Metropolitan Region Vol 1	MPGO	Master Plan
5	1969	Master Plan for Karachi Metropolitan Region Vol 2	MPGO	Master Plan
6	1969	Master Plan for Karachi Metropolitan Region Vol 3	MPGO	Master Plan
7	1974	The Karachi Development Plan 1974-1985	MPGO	Master Plan
8	1979	Karachi Building and Town Planning Regulations	MPGO	Policy
9	1982	Karachi, Physical Situation of Human Settlement	MPGO	Report
10	1985	Karachi Special Development Report	WB/GOP	Report
11	1987	SKAA Katchi Abadis Act 1987	GOS	Legal
12	1988	Second Karachi Water Supply and Sanitation Project	WB/GOP	Report
13	1990	Karachi Coastal Recreational Development Plan 1990-2000	KDA	Policy

14	1991	Karachi Development Plan 2000	MPGO /UNDP	Master Plan
15	1991	Karachi Master Plan 1986-2000	MPGO /UNDP	Report
16	1994	SKAA (Regularization, Improvement, Development) Regulations 1993	GOS	Legal
17	1996	Karachi Water and Sewerage Board Act	GOS	Legal
18	2002	Karachi Building and Town Planning Regulations	GOS	Legal
19	2006	The Study of Water Supply and Sewerage Systems in Karachi	KWSB/JICA	Report
20	2007	Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020	MPGO	Master Plan

APPENDIX B

SCRIPTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) Do you get line water [piped water] in your community?

2) What is the system of getting water [*pāni ka nizām*] here?

3) Is the system of getting water [*pāni ka nizām*] good or bad here?

4) Is the system of getting water [*pāni ka nizām*] the same in other communities/parts of the city?

5) Did you get potable water in the past?

6) Do people sometimes have fights over water in your community?

7) Whose responsibility is it to give you water?

8) Has any political party done work for you now or in the past?

9) Do you get water when there are elections?

10) Who do you think will win in the elections?

APPENDIX C

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Samandar Colony Residents								
Informant #	Interview	Gender	Age Range	Location	Religion	Ethnicity	Household #	Date
1	1	F	65+	HP	Hindu	Gujrati	1	6/19/17
2		F	30-40	HP	Muslim	Gujrati		6/19/17
3	2	M	30-40	HP	Muslim	Pashtun	2	6/22/17
4	3	M	65+	HP	Muslim	Unknown	3	6/24/17
5	4	F	65+	HP	Hindu	Gujrati	4	7/12/17
6		F	30-40	HP	Hindu	Sindhi		7/12/17
7		F	20-30	HP	Hindu	Sindhi		7/12/17
8		M	20-30	HP	Hindu	Sindhi		7/12/17
9	5	F	65+	HP	Hindu	Unknown	5	7/13/17
10	6	F	65+	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	6	7/17/17
11		M	30-40	KP	Muslim	Kutchi		7/17/17
12		F	65+	KP	Muslim	Kutchi		7/17/17
13		M	20-30	KP	Muslim	Kutchi		7/17/17
14	7	M	65+	HP	Muslim	Sindhi	7	7/19/17
15	8	M	40-50	HP	Muslim	Pashtun	8	8/1/17
16		M	65+	HP	Muslim	Pashtun		8/1/17

17	9	M	65+	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	9	6/1/18
18		M	20-30	KP	Muslim	Kutchi		6/1/18
19		M	20-30	KP	Muslim	Kutchi		6/1/18
20		M	40-50	KP	Muslim	Kutchi		6/1/18
21	10	M	40-50	KP	Muslim	Pashtun	10	6/3/18
22		M	40-50	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	11	6/3/18
23		M	30-40	KP	Muslim	Pashtun	12	6/3/18
24		M	40-50	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	13	6/3/18
25	11	M	30-40	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	14	6/5/18
26	12	M	40-50	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	15	6/8/18
27		M	20-30	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	16	6/8/18
28	13	M	30-40	HP	Hindu	Sindhi		6/10/18
29	14	F	50-60	HP	Hindu	Unknown	17	6/12/18
30		M	50-60	HP	Hindu	Unknown		6/12/18
31	15	F	50-60	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	18	6/14/18
32		F	40-50	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	19	6/14/18
33		F	20-30	KP	Muslim	Kutchi		6/14/18
34	16	M	65+	HP	Hindu	Gujrati		6/20/18
35		M	20-30	HP	Hindu	Sindhi	20	6/20/18
36	17	F	20-30	KP	Muslim	Unknown	21	6/23/18
37	18	F	30-40	HP	Hindu	Gujrati	22	6/24/18
38		M	30-40	HP	Hindu	Gujrati		6/24/18
39	19	F	30-40	HP	Hindu	Sindhi	23	6/28/18
40		M	30-40	HP	Hindu	Sindhi		6/28/18
41	20	F	30-40	HP	Muslim	Gujrati	24	7/1/18
42	21	F	65+	HP	Muslim	Gujrati	25	7/2/18

43	22	M	50-60	HP	Hindu	Unknown	26	7/3/18
44	23	M	40-50	HP	Muslim	Sindhi		7/6/18
45		F	40-50	HP	Muslim	Sindhi		7/6/18
46	24	M	30-40	HP	Hindu	Gujrati	27	7/8/18
47		F	30-40	HP	Hindu	Gujrati		7/10/18
48	25	M	30-40	HP	Hindu	Unknown	28	7/14/18
49	26	F	50-60	HP	Hindu	Unknown	29	8/7/18
50		M	40-50	HP	Hindu	Unknown		8/7/18
51	27	M	40-50	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	30	8/9/18
52	28	M	40-50	HP	Muslim	Pashtun	31	8/12/18
53	29	F	20-30	KP	Muslim	Kutchi	32	8/16/18
Samandar Colony Local Leaders								
54	30	M	40-50	SC	Muslim	Unknown		7/2/17
55		M	30-40	SC	Muslim	Pashtun		7/2/17
56		M	50-60	SC	Christian	Unknown		7/2/17
57	31	M	40-50	HP	Muslim	Pashtun	33	7/3/17
58		M	20-30	HP	Muslim	Pashtun		7/3/17
59	32	M	50-60	HP	Muslim	Pashtun		7/3/17
60	33	M	30-40	HP	Hindu	Sindhi	34	7/8/17
61		M	30-40	HP	Hindu	Sindhi		7/8/17
62	34	M	50-60	HP	Hindu	Gujrati	35	6/20/18
63		M	50-60	HP	Hindu	Sindhi		6/20/18
64	35	M	50-60	HP	Muslim	Pashtun	36	7/1/18
Karachi Water and Board Machine Operators								
65	36	M	40-50	N/A	N/A	N/A	37	6/29/18
66	37	M	50-60	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7/15/18

67		M	40-50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7/17/18
68	38	M	40-50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8/13/18
Karachi Water and Board Management								
69	39	M	65+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1/6/17
70	40	M	50-60	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1/17/17
Technocrats								
71	41	M	50-60	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1/12/17
72	42	M	20-30	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6/29/17
73	43	M	30-40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7/13/17
74		F	20-30	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7/13/17
75	44	M	30-40	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7/24/17

APPENDIX D:

NVIVO CODEBOOK

Codes related to methods of water access in Samandar Colony

1) Awami (People's) Tanks

This is a practice by which people line up to receive water from small tanks, usually filled by political parties and distributed by a cadre or someone similar.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents describe their experience accessing, and trying to access, water from these tanks. While these descriptions are often inseparable from discussions of voting and elections, descriptions of the frequency, quality, and reliability of this method are prioritized here. Evidence might also include field notes where the author directly observes the distribution of water supplies through various tanks.

Example:

X tells me that PTI and PPP, on occasion, distribute water. "I don't know if they have a schedule. They have tanks that they give water through. People line up with their containers and collect water." Does this happen only during elections? I ask. Imran tells me he's not sure when or why they distribute water. Only that, elections are currently a long way away, but PTI and PPP are still distributing water. "I don't know if it depends on their mood or what…"

– Fieldnotes, June 2017

2) Bore-well Connections:

Bore-well connections are ubiquitous in Samandar Colony and are often undocumented and self-constructed. These bore wells are used to share water between households.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents talk about the various advantages and disadvantages of accessing water through bore-well connections. A respondent does not have to have a bore-well to discuss this method, as the benefits and subsequent maintenance costs of a bore-well in one household is shared with neighbors who don't have a connection of their own.

Example:

"I can't afford a water motor, and there isn't any water in the line, so I buy sweet water by the gallon. For other needs, like washing clothes and dishes, I use brackish water. I get this water from neighbors who have had boring done. It doesn't cost me anything. But when the boring pump breaks down or stops working, the owner asks us all to contribute to repair it because we all use it. But we need to mix brackish water with sweet water to do household chores. The brackish water doesn't mix well with dish soap or detergent, so we need to add sweet water."

– Interview, July 2017

3) Piped Water:

Most houses in Samandar Colony have piped connections. Those that don't either a) had a connection in the past that is now obsolete b) could not afford the financial investment required to make a connection c) can afford the financial investment but don't see the point in having a pipe connection if others' pipes are dry more often than not.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents describe their experience accessing, and trying to access, piped water. Descriptions are limited to personal experiences with piped water, including experiences

with trying to get piped connections, opinions on the value of piped connections, and past experiences with piped connections. Discussions of who is or isn't getting line water in the community are not included a priori but are included if they are related with a personal experience of piped water access.

Example:

We talk a little bit about how the women have to wake up in the early hours of the day to turn the motor on. X tells me she is alerted by a shopkeeper close by on the days water is suspected. "I wake up and turn the motor on. Sometimes the water comes sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes I stay awake till 4 or 5am and nothing happens. Sometimes the water comes but stops after 10 minutes. Whenever it does come, it comes very slowly."

– Fieldnotes, June 2017

4) Water Vendors:

The most common way to access water in Samandar Colony is through unregulated water vendors who sell water per the gallon. This method of access might qualify as "informal" access in the sense that it is not regulated by the state, at least in terms of price-setting.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents describe their experience accessing, and trying to access, piped water. Descriptions are limited to personal experiences with vendor water.

Example:

UF: What is the system of getting water [*pāni ka niẓām*] here?

X: The system of getting water [*pāni ka niẓām*] here is that we have to buy it. About three years ago one gallon used to cost about 5 rupees. Now it costs 40 rupees! This is hard to get too, people have to work hard. If we buy it from a cart the seller sets his own price.

Some might sell it 10 cans for Rs350 others might sell it for Rs400 or Rs500. These are poor people and they can't afford it. But they need water to drink.

– Interview, June 2018

Codes related to lived experiences of water access in Samandar Colony

1) "Āsra" [hope]:

Respondents use the phrase "*āsra dena*" [giving hope] to describe how elected officials make promises about delivering water to households.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents describe specific instances of promises made to deliver piped water (and generally, public services). Respondents also describe the general practice of elected officials/election hopefuls/local elders making promises. Respondents also describe the meanings behind *āsra* (when asked directly).

Example:

UF: Why is it [elected representatives'] responsibility [to give water]?

X: Because we voted for them. But they just give us *āsra*. They shouldn't give *āsra*. They should do our work. They never say no. They always say the work will be done. But when it will be done, nobody knows. We know they are lying.

- Interview, July 2018

2) Abjection:

The idea that Samandar Colony is ignored by elected officials and formal institutions such as the water board.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Language and experiences describing feelings of being ignored and taken advantage of. Respondents may be describing personal feelings of abjection as well as a wider community sentiment of abjection.

Example:

Samandar Colony is Karachi's oldest settlement, says X. But nobody has done anything for this community despite the fact that Bilawal House is next door and the PPP has dominated local elections for years. If people only look to line their pockets, then what can we do? These are those people that are killing us! How can you live without water? There is a lot of cruelty with water here, he says.

– Fieldnotes, June 2017

3) "Aika Nahi" [Sedenterism}:

Residents claim or express the belief that people refuse to mobilize to demand better and more reliable piped water access or service delivery in general.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents might use language to explain why collective action around the demand for water doesn't work or won't take place. It is important to distinguish sedentarism from abjection. The latter is a code that refers to feelings of being abandoned and his hence associated with the acts of *other* actors (politicians, etc.) The former, however, has everything to do with the internal dynamics of a class of actors describing their own lack of political engagement.

Example:

X: Actually, why do these leaders make money on this? Because our people never complain! Nobody goes to our leaders and complains about what is happening to us.

UF: They don't complain? Why not?

X: Who should we complain to? Whenever we ask someone they say they don't have any power. So we let it go and come home.

<div align="right">– Interview, June 2018</div>

4) "Apni Madat Āap" [Helping oneself]:

Respondents make direct/indirect references to how they must use their own money, personal connections, and sometimes labor to do things like take piped connections to the water infrastructure, clear garbage, and pump sewage water. Also describes an attitude where the lack of state support does not produce modes of community organization and solidarity, but an attitude of "taking care of one's self".

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents describe instances where they have tried to secure access to public services through personal investments in labor and materials. Respondents also describe the meanings associated with *apni madat āap* (when asked directly).

Example:

UF: Let's talk about papers and meters first, you're saying these are not allowed to you?

X: No. We are just not given them. We are not getting connections from the water board. We don't have any paperwork for our connections. And we don't have a water board representative here. We help ourselves.

UF: You help yourselves? How so?

X: We make the hole (*khadda*) ourselves. We do the connection ourselves. We take the pipe home ourselves.

Y: For example, I need water. I take a connection from here. Now, the cost of ensuring that connection reaches my house which is far away and inside the gulley is on my shoulders. I have to pay for all the labor and all the materials. There is no help from the

government in such a circumstance. Even the pipe that was laid here before was done on our own cost.

Z: Even if the government gives us pipes that reach our home. There is no water in them. This is why we come to the main pipe [on the road] for water. We'll keep running after water and one day we'll jump into the ocean [laughs].

– Interview, June 2018

5) Bills:

Almost all houses receive water bills (even if they don't have water connections).

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

This code may include ideas about the legitimacy/illegitimacy of receiving bills, the accuracy of billed amounts, and reasons for the payment/non-payment of bills. Bills associated with things like electricity only included if they are deployed in conversation with reference to water bills.

Example:

UF: Do you think people should have to pay for water?

X: If the government gives you water, then you it's okay to pay a tax on it. But when there isn't any water we shouldn't have to pay the government. This isn't right. We still get a water bill. Our last bill was Rs 25,000. Nobody pays this bill, they tear it and throw it away. We already pay water vendors about Rs4,000. Isn't it better that this money go to the government? If they give us water in the line this money is good for them. But they don't have enough sense to give us this water.

– Interview, July 2017

6) Corruption:

Respondents express the belief that public officials, including elected officials, local councilors, and other state officials are corrupt. Often, corruption is used as a way to

219

explain things like the lack of water by way of suggesting water is illegally monetized and sold by the state officials who control the settlement's supplies.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents use highly normative language describing a wider culture of corruption. Respondents may relate both specific, first-hand experiences of corrupt practices as well as allude to a general belief held by a wider community. Descriptions of corruption are not limited to water but may include experiences with/explanations of other public services as well.

Example:

"If they give line water free of cost…" "Who is going to pay for their water?" interjects X. That's just it says Y. We're dependent on them whether we pay or not. I am, for the umpteenth time, once again related the story of the PTI and PML-N tankers that were shut down so that FA could sell his own tankers. He sells connections, says the man behind me. "He recently sold a connection for 36 lacs." Z knows all about this, continues the man as X and Y nod along. And it's not just this one; he's been selling connections for a long time.

– Fieldnotes, June 2017

7) Fights/Violence

Residents respond to questions about fights/violence over water.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents must describe fights/violence directly (no structural violence). Includes language/experiences about why there are/aren't fights/violence over water, and what the nature of these fights and violence may be.

Example:

UF: Could you say more about that?

X: The people that gave the 300-line, they said they didn't want the pathans to get water. But we thought, after we fill our own water, it's better to give it to someone else instead of throwing it in the gutter. So, the when the pathan's children would come, we would tell them that the water is coming and to bring gallons to fill. Then some houses complained. Some katcha houses said people were giving pathans water so they stopped the water. Then what happened is that the pathans got a line in their area. They started saying that the katcha should not get water then. They kept fighting and that's why they closed the water. This was two or three years ago. Then when the water was turned on again and the same thing happened. So, our people broke the line.

– Interview, June 2018

8) Finances:

Respondents describe the financial costs associated with securing water. Because most households have to purchase water from vendors, residents usually discuss how much they spend on water gallons per day/month.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Not to be confused with money spent on or owed to water bills. This is limited to language or experience which describes the financial aspects (normative/positive) of purchasing water from water vendors.

Example:

UF: Do you get water here?

X: I live here. I am 38 years old. I was born here, I own a business here, and I am an independently elected councilor as well. Ever since I was elected, the biggest worry [*parishani*) we've had is about water… Sometimes water costs Rs. 8,000 a month, sometimes Rs. 7,000. Even someone who has a small family spends about Rs. 4,000. [But

we buy it] because water is such a thing that – it is god's gift – not only the living but the dead need it too.

<div align="right">– Interview, June 2018</div>

9) "Guzāra" [Making Do]

Residents describe how, rather than looking for long term, reliable solutions to their water problems, they make do/subsist through various stop gap means.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents use the word "guzāra" to describe a lived experience/method of water access. Respondents may also, without using the word itself, express sentiments of "making do" or "living day by day."

Example:

UF: Why don't people go?

X: What can I say? We don't have a connection in any case.

UF: Is there any particular reason for that?

X: We usually take water from our neighbors. We get about two or three gallons from them and make do [*guzāra ho jaata hai*]. Or we buy water.

<div align="right">– Interview, June 2018</div>

10) "Majboori" [Compulsion]

Residents claim or express the belief that they are compelled or constrained with the system of water access they have.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Respondents might use language to describe feelings of compulsion and constraint. It is important to distinguish *majboori* from sedentarism. The latter is a code that refers to a lack of collective organization that reproduces the system of water access. The latter is a

sentiment which describes the powerful effect of outside forces. Not something that is produced by the community, but something the community must deal with.

Example:

UF: Is the system of getting water [*pāni ka nizām*] here good or bad? [Scripted judgment question]

X: In my opinion it is bad.

Y: It is very bad. There is no water. We have to buy. The water that we should easily we are not getting. If we got water a lot of our problems would be solved. The main thing we are worried about is water. Because if we don't get water everything else becomes a problem, cooking, cleaning, everything…

X: And if we can't buy water then things are really bad. In the summer, if the sellers don't have tankers then we have to go very far and get water. Then after a few days they'll come to us and say, this is how much a gallon costs (Rs50) if you want it buy it, if you don't want it don't buy it.

Y: Then we have to buy it out of desperation [*majboori*].

– Interview, June 2018

11) Self-organization:

A distinct collection of experiences and meanings from, *apni madat āap;* these are instances when residents talk about or exhibit examples of self-organization to solve problems/meet needs that are not being taken through formal/legal channels. They may include things like community oversight over the water infrastructure or local mechanisms of decision making.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

The key is to distinguish self-organization from *apni madat āap*. The latter is more of an individual perspective describing an individualized experience with accessing public

223

services outside the support of *either* formal/legal means such as the water board *or* sometimes illegal means as patronage. The former, however, involves language or experiences which describe some form of or attempt at community organization in which various types of actors are working together to achieve a goal.

Example:

X: What also happened was that area (Sultan's) wasn't getting any water, just like we aren't getting water here, because they were right at the end. He put in an extra line so that water could be sent on a turn by turn basis through two different pipes. We are thinking about doing the same here because we're in the same situation at the end.

Y: They're going to be fights over that.

X: Just listen to me, it's possible. If all of us get together we can tell them that we're not taking anyone else's water. The people across the street have their own water, the people on this side have their own water, and we have our own. Everyone gets water by turn.

– Fieldnotes, June 2017

12) "Zimidāri" [Responsibility]

Resident discuss whose responsibility it is to give supply line water.

Inclusion/Exclusion criterion:

Residents' interpretations of the individuals/entities responsible for providing line water. Includes language and experiences that suggest who is considered responsible for supplying water. This is very different from corruption, which is a response that blames certain actors for dry pipes. It is entirely possible that those responsible for water are considered different from those responsible for no water.

Example:

X: If there is an honest person and he sees that someone is laying a water pipe for his neighborhood – a line is being laid and then people take several connections from that

line. Now the person who's laying that line, it's his responsibility [*jawab dari*] to tell them that this line is not for them, it's for the settlement! He doesn't say anything to them so they take their connections. And that same water then gets taken elsewhere. We end up getting the line but we don't get water. It's his job, the person who is laying the line for us, to stop them and say this line for this area.

<div align="right">– Interview, June 2018</div>

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