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Significance of Presentation

In this presentation, I discussed a privately developed housing scheme in rural Pakistan. I observed that the housing scheme provides services that the state is expected, but fails to deliver, and in doing so takes on the responsibility of the state. Further, I showed how the development of the housing scheme was made possible by the rural locality's connection to national and regional metropolitan hubs, such as paved roads, the Internet, passports, visas, remittances, etc., which were provided by the state. Thus, I argued that the housing scheme demonstrates a form of state rule through which the state enables, rather than implements development.

My argument strains against those that ascribe private citizens providing state services to the 'weakness' or 'failure' of the state. Such arguments rely on a normative conception of statehood that is based upon Western experiences. On the contrary, I suggest that the privatization of the state is precisely how statehood works in Pakistan. This view is an important contribution to Pakistani Studies, as the Pakistan state is so often assumed to be one that simply lacks capacity.