

AIPS Fellowship Final Report

Project Title: Arboreal Cities—Urban and Political Ecologies of Miyawaki Forests in Pakistan

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Location: Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Lahore, Pakistan

1. Significance to Pakistan Studies

My on-going dissertation research explores how a Japanese model for ecological restoration, the Miyawaki urban forest, transforms local knowledges, practices, and experiences of urban greening in Pakistani cities. This ethnographic study follows the ecological, institutional, and cultural life of the Miyawaki urban forests in Islamabad, a city that was planned as the “green” capital of a post-colonial state. By locating urban governance of the environment through local knowledges, practices, and realities of making and being with nature in the city, this project joins a critical conversation on city-making, and more-than-human relations in the age of the Anthropocene and under ecological disruptions. In addition to an institutional ethnography of the environmental directorates in urban development authorities and national agencies, the study centers upon the expertise and everyday practices of gardeners, nursery owners, and long-term residents to understand how the Miyawaki urban forest is adapted to local cultural and political ecologies. Findings from the research will help propose policies for urban climate action plans, share strategic guidance on urban greening programs, and enhance understanding of local practices, realities, memories, and values around trees and nature in urban spaces.

2. Key Outcomes and Deliverables

The American Institute of Pakistan Studies Pre-doctoral Fellowship allowed me resources to travel to Pakistan, and conduct fieldwork in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Lahore from September to December 2022.

Key Outcomes

- I conducted multiple semi-structured interviews with officials at the Capital Development Authority, Ministry of Climate Change, Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency, National Agricultural Research Center, International Union for Conservation of Nature, and WWF Pakistan. The interviews explored how and why the Miyawaki urban forests were developed, institutionalized, and adapted across local and national scales, and across expertise of forestry, landscape designing, horticulture, climate change, and urban planning.
- In addition, with the help of AIPS funds, I visited and carried out multiple observations at five Miyawaki urban forests in Islamabad, one in Rawalpindi, and two in Lahore. During

these preliminary site visits, I gathered data on the different trees, plants, birds, and other non-human species existing in these sites to better understand the ecological connections.

- Photographs and videos collected these sites that will be helpful in analyzing the sensory and affective qualities of the space.
- I also attended two Environmental Impact Assessment Public Hearings and one Climate Action Protest to understand how trees were discoursed amidst urbanization and development.
- I made initial contact with two nursery managers, three gardeners, and five long-term residents for the next phase of the dissertation research.
- I initiated conversations with two local activists on possible collaborations over ecological justice and community histories in Islamabad.

Deliverables

- I am preparing a paper presentation, tentatively titled “Thinking through density: How Miyawaki Urban Forests will save Pakistani cities” to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers in March 2023.
- I am preparing a short article on the transnational symbolism of the Miyawaki for *Engagement*, a blog published by the Environment and Anthropology Society. Tentatively titled, “Roots over Ground: Heritage connections through Miyawaki Urban Forests.”
- The data collected from this study has been critical towards finalizing the remaining phases of the dissertation research and will form a key component of my dissertation chapters.