

Rehan Rafay Jamil
PhD Student, Department of Political Science
Brown University

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Summary of Research Findings

Project Title: 'The Political Economy of Service Provision in Karachi's Informal Settlements'

Understanding the institutions and political actors the mediate service provision, either through state or non-state channels in Karachi's informal settlements or 'Katchi Abadis', was the primary motivation for my pre-dissertation research. My research aimed to get a broad understanding of the institutional landscape in which state and non-state welfare takes places in informal settlements and unpack some of the key variables that may explain the high levels of variation in service provision across different types of settlements. My research consisted of three components: (i) archival research on the history of urban governance, infrastructure and service provision in Karachi (ii) key informant interviews with urban scholars, journalists, local government and private service providers (iii) interviews with residents, elected Union Council representatives and activists in one of Karachi's largest informal settlements located in Orangi. Each component of my research is described in more detail below:

Archival Research: In order get a historic overview of Karachi's urban development, I conducted archival research at the Sindh Archives in Karachi and the British library in London, one of the largest archives for colonial South Asia. My archival research focused on preparing a literature review of manuscripts that chronicle the origins of colonial Karachi's urban development, particularly the establishment of the Karachi Metropolitan Commission (KMC), the city's original water works in Malir and expansion of the Karachi city port and associated public infrastructure from the 1850s to 1930s. Archival sources also provided secondary data for a research paper on the comparative historic development of urban planning in Bombay and Karachi, two of British India's most prominent port cities that rapidly expanded in the late 19th century.

Key Informant Interviews: I conducted key informant interviews in Karachi with urban development researchers, activists, local government and elected municipal representatives who provided an insight into the complex institutional landscape of state and non-state service welfare provision in Karachi. To understand the role of key government agencies involved in water and sanitation service provision, I conducted interviews at the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board. I also met with experts at NGOs such as Orangi Pilot Project, Khuda ki Basti, Shehri, Urban Resource Center, Karachi Indigenous Peoples Alliance, who provided numerous case studies on the ongoing and contentious politics surrounding service provision, notarization of informal settlements and ubiquitous land grabbing.

Interviews in Orangi: My research site was Orangi in Karachi Orangi is home to one of the largest Katchi abadis in Karachi, which received an influx of Bihari migrants, after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Orangi is also the head office of the Orangi Pilot Project(OPP), one of Pakistan's most well-known NGOs that has extensively mapped informal settlements and created a unique model of community based development focused primarily on neighborhood sanitation. By making OPP a base, I was able to conduct interviews with local residents and newly elected Union Council officials in Orangi and neighboring SITE and Qasba.

Areas for Future Research: The AIPS grant, has been critical in helping me further develop my dissertation focus. My summer research was co-sponsored by Brown University's Graduate Program in Development, where I am a Graduate Fellow (2016-17). I will present my research findings to an interdisciplinary audience of faculty and graduate students scheduled in late October 2016. The title of my presentation is 'The Political Economy of Service Provision in Karachi's Informal Settlements'.

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My archival and field research is leading me in the direction of developing a comparative historical framework to understand contemporary welfare provision challenges in Karachi in a wider institutional context. In this regard, I am particularly interested in comparisons in urban welfare provision between Karachi and Delhi, the two South Asian cities most impacted by Partition related migration in 1947 at its aftermath. A wider research agenda for my dissertation, will be to compare both Indian and Pakistani cities and states cross nationally in a comparative framework to unpack the role of different regime types on welfare outcomes both in the colonial and post-independence periods.