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EDITORIAL ADDRESS Lahore Journal of Policy Studies, Lahore School of Economics, 19 km Burki Road, Lahore-53200, Pakistan  
Tel and Fax: +92-42-36560954  
drmuneeer@lahoreschool.edu.pk  
www.lahorejournalofpolicystudies.edu.pk

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## ABOUT THE CONTENTS

### **Sabuhi Essa:** Khas Daes Kay Aam Log

A road, modern agriculture, education and tourism, Hunza had all the appurtenances of development in a short span of 30 years. Sabuhi lived through it in Karimabad. She left for higher education and then revisited her home. She is left with nostalgia. A modern educated person, why is she longing for the traditional past!

### **Ilyas Chattha:** Artisanal Towns: A Comparative Analysis of Industrial Growth in Sialkot and Jalandhar

Chattha brings us the story of the regeneration of Sialkot's sports goods industry in Sialkot and in Jalandhar after the disruption of the 1947 Partition. It comes on as a roadmap for indigenous industrialization based on skill, entrepreneurship and innovation. All it required from state was protection. This model is in striking contrast with the model which focuses on large scale investment and competitive technology.

### **Bhuvaneswari Raman:** Corridor Urbanization: Practices of Urbanizing Land in India

30 km from Lahore India has been farther than the farthest corners of the globe. With increased scholarly contact more recently one is amazed at the similarity of social structure and issues. Raman has researched the rapidly expanding process of land acquisition for development in Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu. State is now partisan and facilitator on the side of capital and not on the side of the vast atomized majority who vote and fund it.

### **Jakob Steiner:** Neglected Land in Between – The Obliviousness to Small Town Pakistan in the Western Narrative

Where do decision makers in Pakistan and their mentors get their visions from? Steiner shows the world of policy makers is very different from the world of those for whom the policy is made. Small cities do not appear on the map of local or foreign policy makers – breeding an explosive but unknown discontent.

### **Vikram Das Meghwar and Zaheer Ali:** Thar Coal Mega Power Project: Internal Migration, Desertification and Encroachments

Tharis had a way of life and nature on which they survived for centuries. With plans to take over the area for coal mining, big business is threatening not only their survival agriculture and water aquifers but also their self reliant beautiful culture and sustainable livelihoods. Subsisting on livestock Tharis today are seen as an image of the destitute and the famished who need to be provided food, water, medicine, cash. Vikram, who lives in Islamkot, describes how development is encouraging greed and unraveling sustainable nomadic communities.

**Fizza Batool, Rabia Nadir and Munir Ghazanfar: Is Modernity Depleting Bhera**

Bhera does not have the glamorous trappings of a modern city, yet it is here that the impact of modernity can be studied as the old has not yet been eroded beyond recognition. It still exists in peoples' lives and imaginations. Delving deep into Bhera's life Fizza et al make some bold assertions about the change in Bhera.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Sabuhi Essa** teaches at the Department of Architecture National College of Arts, Lahore and also runs a private architectural practice. She has worked in Gilgit-Hunza and Afghanistan with the Agha Khan Trust for Culture and has a special interest in historical settlements and social change.

**Ilyas Chattha** is presently Research Fellow at the Centre for Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies, University of Southampton. His research interests include economic change, urban processes and local craftsmen's contribution in rebuilding the economy of cities in Punjab. He is author of a book on partition titled *Partition and Locality: Violence, Migration and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot 1947-1961* published by Oxford University Press.

**Bhuvanewari Raman** is an Associate Professor at the School of Government and Public Policy of the Jindal Global University in India. Her work is focused on urban governance and poverty, with particular emphasis on contestations to claim land and infrastructure. She has worked on numerous international research projects in India, South Africa and Nepal.

**Jakob Steiner** has a Masters degree in Environmental Engineering from ETH Zurich and Classical Music (Violoncello). He is associated with ETH Zurich and also works at a private consultancy company, Hydrosolutions Ltd. His present research focuses on the response of Himalayan glaciers to climate change.

**Vikram Das Meghwar** is an anthropologist working in Islamabad and belongs to the Islamkot, Tharparkar. His research interest are in ecological anthropology and currently focused on climate change and indigenous knowledge. He has conducted research assignments with Oxfam GB, Haigler Bailly Pakistan, APEX Consulting Pakistan, World Church Service (CWS) Pakistan and Thar Rural Development Project (TRDP).

**Zaheer Ali:** PhD candidate at the School of Law Royal Holloway, University of London. He is working on religious minorities in Pakistan.

**Fizza Batool** is a Teaching and Research Fellow at the Lahore School of Economics. Her research interests include the study of urban environments and education. She continues to research various small towns of Punjab as well as school education in Lahore.

**Rabia Nadir** is Assistant Professor at the Centre for Media Studies with concurrent appointment at the Department of Environmental Science and Policy. Her research interests include urbanization and study of social change. She has recently completed studies of ethnicity and social change in Walled City Lahore followed by one on Bhera. Her ongoing research includes land transformation in Burki – Bedian area of Lahore and on representations of nature in poetry.

**Munir Ghazanfar** is Professor of Environmental Science and Policy at the Lahore School of Economics.



## SMALL CITIES: A COUNTER - NARRATIVE

This issue is a selection of six papers presented at a conference organized by the Department of Environment Science and Policy, Lahore School of Economics titled, 'Environment of Small Cities of Pakistan', in April 2015. The selection provides historical and socio-ecological accounts of six diverse small cities, most in Pakistan and one in south India. The following discussion highlights key findings from the papers and their relevance to critical debates in urbanization, environment and social change.

**Sabuhi Essa** brings the intimacy and empathy of a local to tell the story of social change in Hunza Valley which started in a major way with the building of the Karakorum Highway in 1978. However, the impact of the change hit the people only after the flourishing global tourism in Hunza valley was disrupted by the post 9/11 events. Combining her personal experience and research as an architect studying the built and social life of public spaces in Karimabad city her account is a picture of progressive sundering of place and people with the unfolding of various processes of 'development'. The story of infrastructure development, modern education and tourism is juxtaposed with the less reported narrative of the loss of their proverbial longevity, diaspora, inequality, loss of confidence and reduced cultural diversity. The place gained value as a *Khas* (special) place the people lost their value and became *Aam* (ordinary).

**Ilyas Chattha** narrates an insightful history of the role of artisanal entrepreneurs in industrial development through a case study of the sports industry of Sialkot and Jalandhar. The genesis of Sialkot as a centre of sports manufacture in colonial time was premised on the auspicious ecology of craft manufacture in the small towns and villages in and around Sialkot, including Kotli Loharan, Nizamabad, Wazirabad and Gujranwala. Partition was a major blow to the rising sports and surgical industry in Sialkot and depleted it of capital investment and entrepreneurial acumen of its non-Muslim businessman. In a replay of its role in setting up industry during the colonial period the artisan community (both local and migrant) in Sialkot was able to revive the sports industry with a modicum of state support. In Jalandhar too it was the migrant entrepreneurs and artisans who provided the entrepreneurial and technical knowledge for the rise of Jalandhar as a sports goods manufacturing city almost from a scratch. Chattha is able to make a convincing case of the eminence of high social and technical capital of artisans and small entrepreneurs in the rise of industry versus the currently more recognized role of capital investment. The role of the state in this story lay mainly in protecting the infant industry.

**Jakob Stiener** writes about a western foreigner's impression of the small cities of Pakistan. He frames his narrative through a rhetorical analogy with two divergent experiences of travel between Islamabad and Lahore, one on the historic Grand Trunk Road and its unruly mix of traffic and passage through small towns versus the other on the sanitized, bypass of the modern motorway. The westerners in the development sector as well as senior local bureaucrats travel the motorway and miss out interaction with local realities. Media is no help as it frames Pakistan through clichéd tropes of terrorism and fundamentalism without independent investigation. He finds the educated middle class youth in small cities frustrated by lack of opportunity and angry with the state. The path they choose is of migration abroad and /or find an identity with a religious organizations espousing political agenda.

A paper from across the border in India by **Bhuvaneswari Raman** provides an empirical account of the acquisition of agricultural land for the new road networks as well as the Special Economic Zones (SEZs). With liberalization, the state policies are now bent towards facilitation of foreign investors rather than social protection of local farmers. The state policies calling for a greater connectivity of small cities mainly help integration of global supply chains. A key finding is that legislative interventions in the form of financial and legal amendments are geared towards accelerating corporate real estate development. She observes that there are losers and gainers in the process but the losers are predominantly the economically weak farmers as agricultural land is lost to SEZs and gated enclaves. The process is pushing people out of agriculture.

An ethno-ecology of Islamkot by **Vikram Das and Zaheer Ali** is the story of change which has preceded actual infrastructure development for coal mining project in the Thar desert. Images of development painted by the government to soften the impact of dispossession by the mining conglomerates promote Thar as an upcoming "Dubai". The dissemination of the 'Dubai' myth has brought land speculation and preemptive migration to Islamkot from surrounding villages attracted by the prospects of a market in land and development of infrastructure. The grazing commons or *Gouchar* have been encroached by the new migrants and even inner city locals were seeking to capture land to gain rapid profits. Islamkot had long sustained as a small town in a vulnerable ecological zone. The project launched through the aegis of state power has disrupted the existing ecology and its historical social settlement. A socio-ecological crisis is now developing given the loss of valuable common pastures, potential pollution of the aquifer and destruction of the famed harmony between the large Hindu population and Muslims.

**Fizza Batool et al** query provocatively, 'Is modernity depleting Bhera'. The paper is based on a broad ethnographic research designed to know about changes in local livelihoods and daily life across classes and in institutions, both public and private providing essential services in health and education. The findings reveal a picture of decline in all areas of social life and artisanal local production. Yet modernity is reflected in peoples life in terms of technology and modern institutions like the school and the hospital. Posing the question about the role of modernity provides

an historical framework and situates this decline in a broader narrative. We learn that Bhera till the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century produced a variety of goods for the surrounding hinterland and commanded a niche market in certain items of daily use such as henna dye, combs, wood craft and engraving, earthenware pottery, metal goods and handloom textiles. These small scale crafts of Bhera have virtually disappeared. They did not grow into larger industry. Both the colonial state with its partiality to the metropolitan industries and later the post-colonial state through its support for large scale industrial development and lately import liberalization has dealt a death blow to local production. The decline is equally pronounced in quality of food where the hinterland has moved from agroecological to industrial agriculture. Food is now processed and laced with harmful chemicals. The new motorway has shortened travel distance and has been welcomed by the people but it has also come as a drain taking away local milk and vegetables and inundating the small city with products from large cities. Cheap fizzy drinks have substituted the more nutritious local drinks especially *lassi*. Public education has declined and the privately delivered higher education has expanded especially amongst females but these highly educated females are now working at abysmally low wages. The most critical depletion is that of the quality of local water. The underground drinking water reservoir has been allowed to degrade without adequate support for municipal services and hasty adoption of water based sanitation. The invaluable water commons is fast turning into a commodity as the demand for clean drinking water is increasingly met through a market in bottled water. Last but not least, the diaspora of the educated and the able bodied begs study, is it a social tragedy or cause for celebration.

Fizza et al, this volume, choose to define small city as one where many people know many people. It is such small cities with historicity that we discuss below.

Historically, the small cities of south Asia served as poles of economic and cultural identity for rural hinterlands and flourished under a pre-industrial capitalist urban system. Today they are being incorporated in a planetary urban system through the unchecked flows of material, people and information. For example Karimabad and Islamkot, both small and relatively remote cities of Pakistan show how cities had historically evolved in tandem with their hinterlands and carried unique cultures. These cities had developed an intricate web of livestock and food production system in two divergent but equally harsh arid zones of Pakistan; Karimabad far up north in Hunza valley in the shadow of snow- capped mountains, and Islamkot in the great Thar desert in the south. They are both losing local production and capacity to retain their cultural identity.

Local society born of interdependence in the historical small cities still acts more like a community. It is not to suggest that there are no conflicts and hierarchical differentiation. Sabuhi Essa tells of the traditional spatial segregation in the city of Karimabad according to the social status of the communities but the dominant social ethos developed around the cooperative imperatives of local production. In Islamakot Hindus and Muslims had a history of harmonious living. Migrant non-Tharis arrive motivated by greed for prospects in land and developing infrastructure

and expansion of political /sectarian agendas. This combined with out-migration of locals fails to create conditions for community formation.

The most alarming story from the small towns concerns the pollution of drinking water with unchecked waste disposal into surface water sources such as rivers and streams and mixing of sewage and agrochemicals through seepage into aquifers. The litany of environmental hazards that come with industrialization of agriculture and food processing is also glaring in accounts of Hunza, Islamkot and Bhera. The proverbial good health of Hunza associated with its water and food is now only a nostalgic memory as is *lassi* drinking by rich and poor alike in the small towns of Punjab of yesteryears. One must reflect on the paradox of modernity, there is surplus food in the market and modern medicine but food security has declined (Kamran 2016) and health has deteriorated. The papers report narratives as well as corroborative official evidence.

Modern education and agriculture and crafts are almost mutually exclusive as both compete for time and require apprenticeship at an early age. Agriculture and crafts are also low paying. The new school going generation is fast moving out of agriculture. Culturally too modern education, as delivered to rural people, is designed for middle class urban life and does not inculcate love for rural life. It is thus disruptive for traditional life of small cities and rural communities. Education was considered an equalizer at one time now it is creating inequality. Yet education is fast becoming a new rage in small cities and with its privatization a major new monetary burden. With disappearance of jobs in crafts and change of labour intensive traditional agriculture into capital intensive industrial agriculture education has surfaced as the only hope for jobs in the urban areas or abroad.

The post-Partition policies of the state favoured large scale industry and now liberal imports have let craft based production, an important base for the development of indigenous industry, wither away. The role of the globalisation project to outcompete and shut down local livelihoods, defeat traditional culture and undermine social and environmental stability only highlights the significance of local industry and local production. Sialkot and Jalandhar offer case studies of how small scale industry takes root. Its post-Partition regeneration reveals the deep connection of small scale industry with local artisans and small entrepreneurs. It also shows real industrialization is a cultural phenomenon. It is an endogenous process rooted in the community.

The new urban condition is one of greater global integration achieved through the combined thrust of bigger infrastructure for greater motorisation and digital communication. Historically small cities were part of a system of local production and consumption given the technological limits of communication and uneven nature of development. As Sabuhi shares in case of Hunza, the once localized closed cycle of production had ensured a close knit community. The incorporation into a larger, distant market acts as a drain and produces a global monoculture erasing essential place value. Now the small cities have become part of the global supply

## NEGLECTED LAND IN BETWEEN – THE OBLIVIOUSNESS TO SMALL TOWN PAKISTAN IN THE WESTERN NARRATIVE

### Abstract

The Western imagination of human settlement of the Subcontinent has long been limited to two extreme possibilities - the backward but romantic village in the remote countryside versus the bustling megacity. Ideally, as the representation of the 'modern' Pakistan, India or Bangladesh these worlds collide in literary, cinematic or even scholarly representation. The world in between, life in the small town, the urban peripheries of larger conglomerations and the exchanges between these spaces and their influence on urban growth and rural development have been largely neglected. Not only has this resulted in a very biased imagination of these countries but also in inadequate approaches in infrastructure development funded and thought up outside the country and by the NGO sector that often tries to emulate the western imagination. This paper examines some of these deficiencies. It begins with discussing briefly how Pakistan is framed by the foreign eye that had a chance to actually see the place and where these frames likely originate. It is the simple example of travelling between Lahore and Islamabad, a route often taken by decision makers in international organisations and policy wonks that holds as an initial introduction to the dilemma. The route mostly taken, the Motorway, reproduces the bimodal view of Pakistan of megacity vs. rural village. On the other hand, the GT road, which leads one through the whole spectrum of urban settlements in the country, from the historical metropolis Lahore through the largely unmentioned cities in narratives on Pakistan such as, Gujranwala, Jhelum or Wazirabad to the twin cities, with many smaller towns on the way, is hardly known.

That they should be known, and that this framework of settlement be reimaged - both by the West and *for* the West - is what I ultimately argue in this paper. Current Western engagement with Pakistan centers around the notions of 'migrants' and 'militants,' perceived as the most pressing problems growing out of the Subcontinent. The automatic analysis of these groups places them on the simple binary between city and village, while in reality many Pakistanis that the Europeans encounter are migrants from small towns. To truly understand this illegal migrant population, then, an understanding of their predominantly small town background becomes indispensable. Beginning with secondary research on this general population, and then leading into interviews with illegal migrants in Austria, this paper highlights the importance of small towns in any serious analysis of the migrant situation. Looking at local and

transnational migration patterns and their underlying motivations helps illustrate some of the social dynamics and economic identities which are often rooted in the structures of small town life. By not fitting neatly into either of the two imagined worlds - the village, the megacity - these migrants challenge the current representation and could influence a future approach in development studies.

## Introduction

In this paper I want to outline some observations on how Pakistan is perceived from outside in terms of its urban landscape, how that may be influenced by and in turn have an effect on infrastructural development and finally how this largely skewed perception could actually be challenged by Pakistanis that dominate the formation of a narrative of the country abroad.

While numerous works exist about Pakistan's history, migration and the terrorism complex, conspicuously little critical work is written about how Pakistan is framed in the West apart from the superficial tropes of a failed state<sup>1</sup>. Equally little however is available to the English reader on how the country outside the urban hubs is framed nationally.

The two main points of this paper are thus:

- (I) I argue that Pakistan is perceived by many decision makers in the development sector, humanitarian as well as infrastructural and especially where the two overlap, in a bimodal form. There is the megacity, exemplified most and foremost by Karachi, closely followed by Lahore and the twin cities, Islamabad and Rawalpindi. On the other hand there is the village of mud houses, which to many lawmakers or international staff in Islamabad is likely most closely exemplified by the reconstruction of a Punjabi village at the city's outskirts (Saidpur village) and the exhibits of village life at Lok Virsa, that lets you gaze at what village life does still look like today through a glass screen. Urban spaces in between, from cities like Gujranwala that would qualify as a megacity anywhere in the Western World when it comes to population, to towns like Okara that has the population of Zurich, are largely looked over.

This perception is fostered by the fact that in Pakistan these cities in between are somewhat treated with neglect, leads at the same time however to an even more skewed attention in urban development, as decision makers in funding agencies and international NGOs are hardly aware of this bias.

- (II) I counter this first argument with the proposition that if a Western audience would try to understand more (or listen to) those Pakistanis that tend to dominate the news on the country at least in Europe, illegal migrants and militants, the existence, significance and dynamics of these neglected small towns could be much more easily appreciated. Evidence suggests that both groups, and here I will focus only on the former, tend to hail from just this geographical background, rather than coming from a tiny village in poverty or the bustling megacity.

Some work, albeit unfortunately little noticed by a wider audience, is published that helps to support these theses. However it largely is based on non-numerical, rather narrative analysis.

## Motorway or GT Road?

Arguing about the feasibility of the M2 Motorway between Islamabad and Lahore and discussing its merits over the centuries old connection via the GT road has been a common pastime among people who frequently visit both cities. There are the rumours about its economic impracticability and how its undoubtedly strange route, taking much longer than the GT road, can be explained by the hometowns of politicians in power at the time of construction. The motorway police on the other hand is often cited as the most decent police force in the country on a road that however often sees little traffic. Conspicuously little however has been written about the significance of these two transport lines for an urban Pakistani commuting between two of the largest urban areas in the country.

The dichotomies between these two lines will, without letting them become at any point the main topic of the paper, form the initial frame of my two major arguments.

Taking the motorway from Lahore, one leaves the city behind in one of its chaotic outer parts, at Thoker Niaz Baig, and within 10 minutes has the lush countryside Punjab on both sides of the road. The entrance into Rawalpindi or Islamabad is about as abrupt. One gets the idea, that there is not much in between a 10 million inhabitant agglomeration and villages with no more than a score or 50 *kacha* houses. The road is lined by a fence keeping trespassers and animals out, which often prompted local farmers to cut the wire and cross nevertheless (Khan 2006). Many of the foreign staff of international organizations, who travel between the cities for work or because they leave Islamabad for a day's culture trip to Lahore, but also one or the other local, see no more. The motorway is the ideal visualization of how Pakistan is perceived by those who may have been to the country, even extensively, but never really 'saw' it.

The GT road on the other hand presents the complete urban spectrum of the country. Leaving Lahore through Shahdara one passes through lesser known "small" towns like Muridke, Kharian or Gujjar Khan as well as actual large cities – Gujrat, Jhelum – and one of Pakistan's largest that is hardly known outside the country and I argue hence rather understood as a 'small town', Gujranwala. It gives an impression of the historical connectivity of the subcontinent, a cross-section through different trades of the Punjab and upcoming knowledge hubs outside the main cities and a taste of the country's dangerous roads. It was already recognized many centuries back that the G.T. road embedded in the small town landscape was an essential feature of the road itself (Sarkar 1927; Khan 2006). However relatively few of the people who just travel from Islamabad to Lahore or back have taken this road and it has received little attention in coverage of the country (NPR 2011). The GT road is nevertheless the ideal visualization of a large spectrum of the inhabited parts of the country (apart from the mountainous and desert areas).

One could do away with the ignorance of outsiders – foreigners, but I would also count some Pakistanis among them - about ‘small town’ Pakistan, if these were not people who had a say in essential decisions in the humanitarian and infrastructural development of the country.

## Defining ‘Small Town’

Two main strands of still ongoing discussion on the urban make it difficult to define what a small town on the Subcontinent is and how it is described. With new forms of urbanism quickly developing there is still a lack of consensus on how cities, towns or urban spaces are really defined (Brenner and Schmid, 2015). At the same time a thorough analysis of the postcolonial town is still outstanding and in Western texts often still extremely biased. Historical analysis is often based solely on colonial records in Western languages and completely miss the view of local inhabitants or scholars (King 2009).

Also in most European countries or in the US there is no clear definition of what constitutes a town. In India a number of factors apply, among them a lower population limit of 5000 (Census of India 2011) while in Pakistan the definition seems to be (unofficially) a population between 10000 and 50000 (Dutt 1994). Even if there would be a clear consensus on the numbers, a direct comparison of those is still hugely problematic as there is no standardized terminology associated with the respective population statistics (Satterthwaite 2010).

While in terms of infrastructure solutions, population size would be an essential parameter, the distinction between city, small town and village seems to be less informed by it rather than a preconceived notion of what is a town and what is a village. With the Western idea of a town, including a public transport system, a defined city centre, an industrial area that developed outside the city’s residential area at a later stage and multi-storey apartment complexes, many towns in Pakistan, where no infrastructure development is obvious and many houses are brick constructions are simply rather perceived as a larger village. For the case of Jalalpur Sharif (Figure 1), this is true even though the population is relatively rich and well connected to both road links, the GT Road and the Motorway. Actual cities, that today have populations surpassing the one million mark and would be a major city in Europe, are regarded as a small town in the western imagination for Pakistan, for a lack of places of public interest and, what would be perceived as rural infrastructure in Europe. In a neighbourhood in Nowshera, a city with more than 1 million inhabitants, where people follow an urban lifestyle and have jobs in the services sector or industry rather than agriculture, drinking water is still retrieved from wells located at numerous spots along the alleyways (Figure 2).

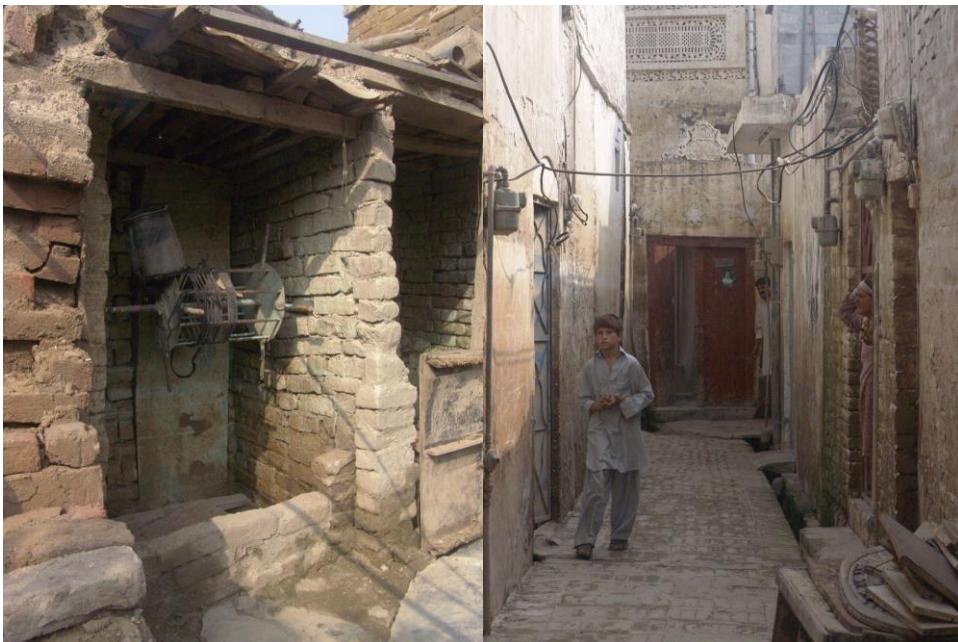
On the other hand, a city like Sialkot, having gained wide media attention with the soccer ball production is readily assumed to be a city not because of its population but since it is strongly connected to the ‘modern world’ through a Western – ‘modern’ - sport.

In other provinces the border between large city, town and village is likely quite different again. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or Balochistan, areas outside Peshawar and

Quetta are quickly termed remote and rural, by national as well as international media and people. This is simply so because few outsiders dare or make the effort to go there and appreciate urban space. In an area south of Peshawar where we work since 2010, no electric grid is available, neither is water supply. This is largely because the area is negligible as a vote bank and too poor to be able to provide for these commodities financially.



**Figure 1: Jalapur Sharif, ca. 40 000 inhabitants, view towards river Jhelum (2007)**



**Figure 2: Drinking water Supply in a residential area in the centre of Nowshera days after the 2010 floods.**

While the framing of Pakistan in the Western eye is thus limited to the megacity and the village, the people who lie at the basis on how foreigners perceive Pakistan from outside are actually hailing from just the neglected urban areas in between. It is especially the areas along the GT road, rather than the major hubs at each end of it or the villages one can see from the Motorway, that are home to two parts of the society that shape the narrative.

## Migrants and Militants<sup>2</sup>

The narrative on Pakistan, in Europe at least, is shaped by the presence of migrants and the narrative of militants created by the media and other discourse by a selected part of the population. The number of illegal migrants from Pakistan to Europe has increased dramatically in the last years. The large number of young men reaching Europe as asylum seekers from all countries, including Syria, has been an ever-present part of the debate on the topic in recent months. The high percentage of young men from Pakistan, relative to all asylum seekers from that country, is however unmatched until the recent refugee wave from Syria and other countries. In Austria, where interviews were conducted, the percentage of male asylum seekers compared to the total between 2010 to 2012 never fell below 96%. For all nationalities that value was between 68 and 75%. Even for countries where war is often accepted as a reason to leave for Europe, as currently in Syria or Afghanistan, the question is often posed in media, why seemingly many more of the migrants are young men rather than women or children. For Pakistan, where war is apart from a few areas probably not a major reason, so called push-factors need to be found elsewhere.

Scholarship on migration in Pakistan predominately looks at internal migration or labour migration to the Gulf discussing mainly economic push factors and relying on census data. This data however does not cover refugees or people with an illegal status, which applies to most of the Pakistanis who currently migrate to Europe and is at the same time the most difficult to assess (Gazdar 2003).

A definite motivation for young men to leave the country is the vague, luring idea of Europe that was shaped by returnees who themselves had left for Europe years before. In their relatively small urban community these men were able to show off the fact that they had been abroad (even if that did not necessarily mean they could afford the more lavish lifestyle they tried to portray) and fostered an idea of Europe that became tempting for others who saw their prospects diminished in Pakistan. At the same time the growing number of the better educated young men leaving a town turns it into an 'orphaned' town, resulting in even more people wishing to leave the place.

Earlier studies suggest that areas where people migrate from are the same for internal migrants as for emigrants (Hasan and Raza 2009). However no more recent studies exist and only one provides a better insight on people who have actually left the country and are now in Europe (Ahmad 2011).

In this book on illegal immigrants from Pakistan to Europe (Ahmad 2011) the author states that many of the men he interviewed were from small town Punjab. The town he introduces in his introduction, Chot Deeran, is very close and similar to Jalalpur Sharif (Figure 1). As he describes it, “sky-scraping émigré mosque-mansions are often surrounded by poor connecting roads, inadequate sewerage systems and brick-kilns worked by entire families”, describes well the ambiguous infrastructure of the small town discussed earlier, where rural infrastructure meets the urban demand.

Two generations of migrants to Europe, which correspond to two waves of migration, are portrayed. There were men, later bringing their families, in the 1960s who came legally mostly to the UK, often from Mirpur and Jhelum. In the late 1990s men came largely alone from all over Pakistan to the UK and specifically from the GT road area, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujranwala, Gujrat or Muridke to mainland Europe. This wave corresponds to the peak that decreases at the beginning of the data available in Scholarship on migration in Pakistan predominately looks at internal migration or labour migration to the Gulf discussing mainly economic push factors and relying on census data. This data however does not cover refugees or people with an illegal status, which applies to most of the Pakistanis who currently migrate to Europe and is at the same time the most difficult to assess (Gazdar 2003).

Since then, the number of migrants has yet again increased once more since 2010, which constitutes the third wave of migration to Europe since Partition. The interviews portray this generation.

Between 2013 and 2014, we carried out a number of interviews with male asylum seekers in Austria, all of them who came to Europe independently. Only one was from Lahore, three from Sialkot, two from Gujranwala, one from Gujrat, one from Swabi, one from Muzaffarabad, two from Mingora, one from Miram Shah, three from Parachinar and two from undisclosed towns around Peshawar. Three more were from different Agencies in FATA. None of the migrants were from Balochistan or Sindh and to the interviewees knowledge there were none in Austria. The same observation was true for subsequent interviews with legal and illegal migrants from Pakistan to Italy.

Some men claimed they were threatened by state or non-state agencies, most however had no concrete incentive. They generally had a good education level, having joined college or even completed a Masters degree.

A number of migrants were from one town from the FATA, Parachinar. The networks they had while still there, spanning across families, now span over Europe. One of the men, like most of them from the Turi clan, recounted where in Parachinar he lived and had given up a new house after a 35 lakh rupee (Rs.3.5 million) investment. He also precisely knew in which towns in Austria other Turis were now waiting for a decision on their asylum application. His account was to have come from the town of Parachinar to the city of Vienna rather than from Pakistan to Austria. This had of course to do also with the fact that they blamed the state for being left

alone in the fight against the local extremist outfits. But a similar focus on the hometown was also given by Sunni Mehsuds from Miram Shah.

A man from Sialkot emphasized as his place of origin a specific *mohalla* of Sialkot. This was essential for his story as he claimed to have fled because of a recent conversion from Sunni to Shia.

A priest from Gujrat who studied at Peshawar University and now sells selfie-sticks on Italian streets showed me Youtube videos from his church in his hometown where he held the mass. This functioned in a way as his 'business card' abroad. Men from Mingora were still active in local politics through their Facebook accounts. Hailing from relatively small political districts they were personally familiar with people running for political posts and what they were standing for. At the same time for some that however also turned into a reason to leave after some political disputes over local power turned ugly.

An important question is what influences the choice of going to Europe over moving to Lahore or Karachi. If a main driver for relocating is the lack of opportunities in small towns and the neglect they are facing from the people in power, why does a migrant choose the much more cost intensive and risky option of moving to Europe over moving up or down the GT road into the prospects of a better education or job in one of the large cities?

Many of the recent migrants however actually moved to mostly Lahore or Karachi before they left for Europe. Some went because they needed to get in touch with the agent who facilitated their route to Europe. Many went to the large city's outskirts because they were internal labour migrants before they left the country. But a job alone was not enough. The frustration with the state because of persecution, insecurity or lack of opportunity was the bigger reason.

For some the safety of their life was the main argument. Threatened by sectarian outfits, unidentified agencies or other community members within their town they saw no other option than to leave their often tightly knit neighborhoods. For others it was the lack of economic security to be able to develop one's own business and the inability of the local government to provide an education that raised frustration.

For all men the identification with the hometown and the people from there was immensely important and superseded the interest in the national cricket team or Pakistani foreign politics. A dense urban area that grew more or less organically over the decades and an experience of local as well as national politics at their doorstep probably facilitates an identification with the town. This is further intensified by the unifying disappointment with the state. Many were highly critical of the state in its internal workings as well as its foreign policy.

The common understanding among Europeans why Pakistani men come to Europe alone is for economic reasons. However nearly all men received money through

money wiring services from home, rather than sending any back. None of them was compelled to take up a manual job somewhere immediately to earn a living. While Austrian media and the men's local supporters continued to draw a picture of men who were from remote regions and under continuous life threat from the Taliban, they themselves, when talking in Urdu, Pashto or Punjabi, were sometimes even eager to try to convey that they were from a similar background as an Austrian from one of the Viennese suburbs. They had jobs in Pakistan but were largely dissatisfied with their situation.

The hub of migrants to Europe outside the UK is, incidentally, the wider area around Gujranwala and here often towns like Mandi Bahauddin or Pasrur. This corresponds exactly with the region where militants of Lashkar-e-Toiba hail from. Using the neglect of the 'lesser cities' both hail from, as a common (de-)motivation, perhaps a link can be found. These towns have an inadequate infrastructure and provide no matching opportunities for what they promise with the existing exposure to education and attractive lifestyles elsewhere, be it in Lahore or London. Leaving to look for an imagined better life in Europe, or by waging Jihad in Kashmir may be just two diverging paths from the same initial motivation, at the base of which lies the life in a small town in Pakistan.

Eventually of course one could turn the whole argument around. The neglect the small towns in Pakistan face since long and seemingly increasingly so, with attention focused on megacity booming and rural development but nothing in between, is fuel to growing discontent that results in militant recruitment on the one hand or increased illegal migration on the other.

## Conclusion

There is no singular definition of what makes a town, or put differently what discerns it from a large city or a village. It seems however that in the Western imagination of Pakistan as well as in the discourse on infrastructure, the town hardly surfaces. Everyone is talking about the megacities and on the other hand the rural Pakistan. In between there is a void. To put it in the words of the image used in the beginning of the paper, everyone is driving from Lahore to Islamabad on the motorway. Nobody takes the GT road and gets to appreciate the diversity of urban Pakistan. This is troubling for a number of reasons.

Growth rates of some of those smaller cities or towns are the highest in the country (Vandal 2004) and taken together these urban areas today probably constitute the largest part of the country's population vis a vis the population of megacities and the rural population. At the same time they are neglected in terms of infrastructural and humanitarian development. Construction of water supply, wastewater and waste disposal facilities as well as provisions of commodities such as cinemas are promoted at great expense in the megacities. On the other hand NGOs are largely focused on the rural poor. The towns in between are left out. Institutional development of local

administration is largely dependent on whether those towns brought forth powerful people that have a say in the National or Provincial capital.

It is then pertinent to note that the people who shape the perception of Pakistan abroad, migrants and militants, hail from exactly these towns. As many migrants are from a middle class background and do not necessarily face economic hardship in Pakistan and many also have no record of persecution for sectarian, religious or political reasons possible push-factors could be found elsewhere. Migrants show a strong identification with their hometown but are frustrated with the neglect it faces from the government compared to the large cities. This neglect resulting in a serious lack of opportunities turns into a significant driver for migration itself. As the source of this discontent, the state as a power structure itself, is the same in the large cities but it is these large cities that are attracting all the attention.

The migrants' stories could help decision makers in the development of the country to understand their target better, acknowledge a part of the country that is until today still largely overlooked.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>A notable exception, although only a collection of short blog posts would be (Ahmed, 2011).

<sup>2</sup>This subtitle is inspired by another excellent account of life and dynamics in a Pakistani 'small town', Hyderabad, in the sense of the word as discussed above (Verkaaik, 2004)

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