

AIPS Summer (2106) Research Grant Proposal

1. The Context: Karachi, one of the largest megacities in the Global South that is often viewed through the lens of urban dystopia. Ethnic and sectarian politics, criminal gangs and endemic urban poverty are common frameworks to understand the city and its well known fault lines. Yet empirical literature on the quotidian practices through which the urban poor access governance and services in Karachi are limited. Research on informal settlements in megacities in the Global South indicates that there is significant variation in service delivery and quality of public goods available in settlements. Aided by new technologies such as GIS, Urban planners, activists and communities are mapping neighbourhoods, infrastructure and community assets in informal settlements. This documentation can play a critical role in contesting elite visions of the city that see informal settlements as lacking basic infrastructure and resources. My doctoral research on the relationship political competition, service delivery and political violence focuses on Karachi's informal settlements. It is estimated that that 62% of Karachi's population live in informal settlements (Hassan, 2011). Access to basic services and public goods in these areas varies significantly depending on the influence of a particular political party and an array of informal middlemen who mediate service provision (Gazdar, 2013).

2. The Research Question: My research question seeks to identify the causal factors that explain why certain settlements have much higher public goods provision, while others have little or none. I am particularly interested in investigating whether increased inter-party political competition leads to improved provision of basic services and any changes in levels of political violence. The objective of this phase of my research will be to more closely examine the relationship between political competition and service provision and identify the actors and processes through which informal services are delivered.

3. Research Methods: Studying service provision and political violence in a city as diverse as Karachi will require a mixed methods approach. Although the overall research strategy for my dissertation includes a representative household survey and use of spatial data to analyse patterns in service delivery, I plan to start my research by collecting qualitative data to understand how settlement residents access services. Therefore, I propose using the AIPS grant to conduct preliminary qualitative interviews, archival and secondary research in Karachi during the summer of 2016.

4. The three components of my proposed summer field work (June – August 2016):

- **Archival Research:** In order to gain a historical perspective on urban planning and development in Karachi I will do archival research at the Sindh Government Archive and as well visiting major newspaper archives (The Daily Dawn and Jang) to collect reports on political violence. This research will be useful to obtain secondary sources (articles, policy reports, maps, land records) and provide important historical references about the governance and expansion of settlements across time.
- **Key Informant Interviews:** I will conduct interviews with key government officials in relevant state entities (Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority) as well as experts in urban planning and development in Karachi. Potential interviewees include Arif Hasan (Urban Resource Institute), Dr Tasneem Siddiqi (Khuda Ki Basti), Haris Gazdar (Collective for Social Science Research) and Roland Dsouza (Shehri) and staff at NGOs focused on low income urban service provision and housing for the such as Orangi Pilot Project and Saiban.

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- **Preliminary Qualitative research:** Qualitative interviews with residents and service providers in informal settlements will help me understand how citizens in different types of settlements access services and engage in political processes. I will develop a brief semi-structured interview protocol to identify an informal settlement with enough variation in political party representation and levels of service provision to begin testing my hypothesis. These semi-structured interviews will serve as building blocks for developing case studies of different typologies of settlements as my dissertation evolves.

5. References:

Hasan, A. 'Designing Density in Karachi: Alternatives to Apartment Blocks'. 2011.

Gazdar, H and Mallah, HB 'Informality and Political Violence in Karachi' Urban Studies. 2013.

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