



Walled-In

Dispossession, Ethnicity and Resistance in Malir Villages Inside Bahria Town Karachi

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I hereby declare that this master thesis is entirely my own original work. All sources that I used across the work have been appropriately acknowledged.

“Insurgency was thus, the necessary antithesis of colonialism...”

**-Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India
(1983)**

Abstract

Mirroring national and global land grabs, Karachi's Malir district has become characterised by the displacement of farming villages along the city's peripheries and the conversion of their land into real estate housing in the form of gated townships like Bahria Town Karachi (BTK). Influenced by the city's economic liberalization efforts since the turn of the 21st century, and informed by a history of colonial and post-colonial governance strategies, land transformation has greatly affected the social, economic and political relations between villages and their farmland along peri-urban Karachi. This thesis addresses the case of three villages that lost their farmland to BTK within various configurations of (il)legality, and are now walled inside the gated township, to understand the politics of enclosure and resistance. While some research exists on the structural modes of dispossession that enables the accumulation of land in Malir for urban development efforts, little attention has been paid to the everyday lives of those who are dispossessed. Further, even less attention is paid to the space and nature of ordinary violence produced under the conditions of accumulation of capital, and the many heterogeneous and relational ways of resistance that exist and are born out of that space. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork carried out across 2024 this thesis addresses this gap by proposing two scales of inquiry: *Firstly, I want to understand, through the development of BTK, how experiences of ABD are reflected in the social, political and spatial registers of contemporary urbanization in Karachi, and secondly, to understand how the Baloch and Sindhi village residents experience racial capitalist enclosures and resist against them at multiple scales inside the boundaries of BTK.* In this way, this thesis contributes to the growing literature on the many localised variants of the process of ABD in cities of the Global South and offers new insights on the contemporary dynamics of urbanization born out of global capitalist flows and colonialism and highlights the ongoing resistance to it in the Global South.

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1. Introduction

As you make your way from Nooriabad southward into Karachi, the M-9 highway hosts vast tracts of semi-arid hilly lands that comprise farms, villages and pastures for cattle grazing. In the backdrop are spectres of industrialization marked with billboards, logos and security infrastructures such as gates, guards, check points and walls. Much of Pakistan's industrial areas lay beyond urban cores, and are owned by private corporations, the military, the bureaucratic elite, or a combination thereof (Akhtar and Rashid 2021; Siddiqi 2016). Much of what goes around in the peripheries of cities, is similarly influenced by decisions made by various conglomerations of power such as the military, state or corporate actors. Accompanying this landscape are many newly developed housing schemes that can be visually understood as being at odds with farmlands, manifest in the erection of walls, in barbed wire separations and giant gates as spectacles of portal-like entrances almost marking an oppositional distinction between what is understood as Karachi and the promise of new cities. While such a fractured geography represents a flux in both Karachi's land-use planning and its political workings, it simultaneously represents how communities are impacted by the prospect of 'development' along multiple scales (Anwar 2018).

Owned by Malik Riaz, as the largest private gated housing enclave, Bahria Town Karachi (BTK) has made itself manifest through its skyline and a distinctly large metal gate for any passerby heading into Karachi. An array of tall towers can be seen from miles away. Some passersby even mistake it for Karachi proper, capturing the moment of passing this mega-development on their phones, almost illuminating a desire for what Karachi could look like, from afar. But upon nearing the spectacle, one is confronted with gates, walls and a high security perimeter. In the popular urban imaginary, Karachi starts from the Malir Cantonment, roughly twelve kilometers beyond BTK (Hasan 2015). BTK nonetheless, lies within city limits, in Karachi's largest district, Malir. For years, it was this view I encountered from the road along the M-9 highway when entering the city. A big "I *heart emoji* Bahria Town Karachi" billboard ephemerally towers over every passerby who heads into the city as a visual marker of power, capital and a promise of security. Such a spectacle demands an interrogation into what is at stake for Karachi's urban future in relation to mega development projects. How did a mammoth project like BTK come to materialize, and what does it tell us about the shifting socio-spatial relations between residents of the district and incoming capital?

Despite living in Karachi for over five years, I only ventured inside the gates of BTK for the first time in February 2024. It was with Hafeez Baloch, a leading figure of the Sindh Indigenous Rights Alliance (SIRA) and a member of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) (Akram 2023). While SIRA is an active voice in Karachi's housing and land rights movement, BYC is a larger humanitarian movement against the ongoing military and state violence against the Baloch people in Balochistan. Both movements are tangentially related in struggles against dispossession and military-state violence. Hafeez often leads informal tours for researchers and artists to ground activism and inquiry in space. He took me inside the premises of BTK to give me a sense of how Malik Riaz, the colloquial "king of real estate in Pakistan" (Javid 2019), was transforming these (formerly) farm-lands into prospects of accumulation, dispossession and fantasy, pointing out the Hilton hotel project, the Emaar golf courses, replicas of the Eiffel Tower and Trafalgar square and the Paragon sponsored grand mosque as symbolic features of global, military and industrial capital and the imaginaries BTK relies on to reproduce itself. Within the gated compound, we spent hours

driving on its 6-lane roads with seemingly ‘planned’ arrangements for housing and amenities. It was so vast that one could easily forget that it is a walled compound, with a boundary wall stretching over 80 kilometers. Branded as a ‘town’ after all, it is marketed to host more than a million residents in its Karachi iteration alone and millions more if we consider the Bahria Towns in other cities of Pakistan, such as Rawalpindi-Islamabad, Lahore and Nawabshah.

As we drove deeper into the enclave, Hafeez directed me to the road opposite the golf courses, where we stopped at the side of a service lane. He led me down an unpaved track heading down into a basin-like territory, seemingly a desolate space perhaps for residual construction material, walled from all sides with a small opening only to be trekked on by foot or bike (see Fig 1). He said this is one of the many villages *inside* BTK.



Figure 1 (Author, 2024) HAMG village opening.

It was Goth Haji Ali Mohammad Gabol (HAMG), a Baloch village walled inside the gated township, with a total population of approx. 500, boasting a vastly different geography, housing and population than that of BTK. We had officially entered non-BTK territory, something akin to an autonomous zone but with prison like qualities. Next to the village was another walled compound with graffiti spelling the word “graveyard” and beyond it, another smaller yellow-stone graveyard, with markings stating the year “1612” and Persian inscriptions on it. From Hafeez’s account, the stone slabs guarding the 17th century Persianate graveyard were toppled over in an attempt to pave a road over it. However, local resistance stopped the attempted demolition and through legal proceedings, declared it as a protected heritage site. In order to co-opt the resistance, BTK put up signs drawing attention to the site as a ‘historical landmark’, imbricating the space with a touristic quality and bringing this site into the folds of value accumulation.

Over the course of 2024, I have made several trips into villages within BTK to converse with residents who were formerly farmers, to understand their daily access into and out of the walls that enclose them. I wanted to know why there were walls in the first place, who put them there, and what were the political, material and affective registers of response by the village residents to this recent phenomenon. Coming from the density and confinement of central Karachi, it was intriguing to me to witness such confinement within an expansive, formerly agrarian landscape.

This transformation raises questions on the materiality of capitalist enclosures, and how conditions for surveillance, security and occupation are prepared at an unprecedented scale in the race to “develop” land. Military grade blockades, barriers and barbed wire stretch across the borders and main gates of BTK and much of this security infrastructure is mirrored throughout the smaller openings and closings of the villages. Speaking with some of the village residents, I learnt that many have adapted the local vernacular of “imprisonment” to make sense of their lives inside the walls (HAMG Resident 2024). While some residents spoke about the court battles, they fought for the walls to be erected as a way of protecting whatever land they could, residents of other villages spoke hesitantly of how the walls were enforced by the developer, exemplifying the heterogeneous and contradictory nature of walling infrastructure and its consequent intentions. Throughout my conversations, the question of ethnic violence simultaneously resurfaced, charactersizing the walling and dispossession of land as particularly an ethnic and racially motivated process. The victims of this violence are primarily the Baloch and Sindhi populations of Malir. As this thesis will further show, ethnic and racial violence in Pakistan have several colonial, postcolonial and military purposes, and the subjects of violence are socio-spatially, politically and historically produced. The villages in Malir are part of this historical production. Speaking to the village residents, it appeared to be a corrosive environment where the villages had gone through too much violence over the last decade to now be able to speak about it while the threat of eviction and displacement looms over them. The memories of walling, which emerged at the beginning of 2018, and the heterogeneous reactions of the villages, have come to displace much concern for resistance onto daily survival.

This thesis builds from these observations to ethnographically study how the villages inside BTK negotiate larger capitalist enclosures in the neoliberal economic exploits of the Pakistani nation building project which unfolds in and through the process of urbanizing Karachi, and how then the walling of these villages impacts its residents’ daily lives. This leads me to a two-fold **research question**: *Firstly, I want to understand, through the development of BTK, how experiences of accumulation by dispossession (ABD) are reflected in the social, political and spatial registers of contemporary urbanization in Karachi, and secondly, how the Baloch and Sindhi village residents experience racial capitalist enclosures and resist against them at multiple scales inside and outside the boundaries of BTK.* The first of these inquiries is in part a response to Harvey’s notion of ‘predatory’ practices involved in the process of accumulation as an intrinsic feature of capitalism (Harvey 2004), which I further develop regarding racial logics and through recent literature on racial capitalism; and the second an expansion of Tilley, Kumar and Cowan’s (2017, pp. 426) call to understand primitive accumulation as “always constituted by resistant forces which come to limit, shape and/or circumvent strategies of dispossession” through various disruptive and quiet modes of counter action.

Scholars have variously studied processes of ABD, racial capitalism and resistance across a range of geographical, political and social settings. Daniel Bin (2024), for instance, in his recent study *Capitalist Disposessions* looks at the case of Brazil to identify multiple forms of contemporary disposessions that relate to accumulation; through agriculture and military rule, economic policy, the Olympic games and the pandemic. He shows the cumulative forces of dispossession in its varying iterations and highlights the ongoing anti-capitalist struggle against it through the presence of commons that indicate a weakening of capital. Similarly, Marcos Pedlowski (2013) shows how the Brazilian government became the ‘land grabber’ to accelerate ‘development’ and ‘urban

growth’ at the cost of expropriating native Brazillians along the coast of Rio De Janeiro. Elsewhere, Noah Echa Attah (2021) has shown how race and capital are tied to enforce land deals in Nigeria under the prospect of ‘modernizing’ the country. He particularly shows how race and class are tied to rural-urban land reconfigurations that dispossess local farmers, expropriate their labor and tie them to incoming capital. Given that the BTK case is tied to rural-urban-agrarian and ethnic spatial struggles, Kenton Card et al. (2025) look at the ways in which dispossessions are subsumed within real estate transactions and their underlying racial and ethnic implications as these transactions move between rural, urban and agrarian fronts. Arguing through the Black Radical Tradition, they study the possibilities and orientations that contemporary urban housing rights movements can provide in developing frameworks of resistance. In the case of Pakistan, and across larger South Asia, literature has similarly shown processes of dispossession unfolding through various uses of race and ethnicity (often in the form of caste, religion or region) in the race for modernization. These contestations, as studies on Islamabad, Lahore, Gurgaon, Mumbai, Bangalore, Sheikhpura, Southern Punjab and Karachi have shown, are often played out within the domain of land grabbing as accumulating capital (See Anwar 2018; Nasir 2014; Gururani 2019; Anand 2023; Khan 2025; Ahmad 2022; Akhtar et al. 2021). These scholars have simultaneously also consistently highlighted the presence of resistance that shape and are shaped by the struggled local communities face in confronting development and dispossession (Levien, 2015). This thesis, focusing on the district of Malir, adds to the emerging literature on dispossessions, racial capitalism and resistance as processes of land grabbing continue in the violent efforts for development, modernization and neoliberalization. As a site for rural-urban contestation, Malir has become a district rife with struggles for indigenous Baloch and Sindhi land. BTK’s mobilization to develop land highlights this struggle, especially in the ways in which land is accumulated through racial logics of exclusion and, in the words of Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2002), *partition*.

I use this literature from ABD, racial capitalism and resistance, to study three villages inside BTK that poignantly shape our understanding of the district’s spatial, political and socio-cultural domains: Goth Haji Ali Muhammad Gabol (HAMG) with a population of approx. 500; Goth Ali Daad Gabol (ADG) with a population of 700, and Deepar Goondar Goth (DGG) with a total population of 1500 residents. The former two villages belong to the Gabol (Baloch tribe) and the latter to the Goondar (Sindhi tribe). All three villages are walled, among several others, without infrastructural and municipal provisions like roads, water, gas, electricity lines, hospitals and employment. The villages have also been equally deprived of social and cultural institutions like schools, farming land and spatially organized kinship networks that would previously attend to their daily needs. The research thus ethnographically sketches the social and spatial state of the villages and its residents as they find themselves conducting daily life behind, against and through the walls that confine them. It further poses questions around the nature of dispossession, informality and the spatial deployment of power by the developer-state in the form of enclosures in the district.

This research is built on 10 months of ethnographic engagement with the villages and uses long form conversations with village elders, activists and journalists to understand the nature of dispossession and everyday life inside BTK. I use photography to reveal sites of interaction, displacement and profiteering as constitutive dynamics of the ongoing relationships between the villages and BTK, between BTK and residents of Karachi, and BTK’s ongoing expansion. The

counterproductive enclosures become material cultures of an emergent life that takes place through the practice of walling and security features as its regulators. The study also draws from 12 long-form interviews I conducted during field work, and maps produced by SIRA, to give weight to the observations and engage local responses and tours to help narrate this story. Through this methodological undertaking, I highlight the ways in which Malir is produced by state and non-state actors, as a district whose land is up-for-grabs, and the ways in which this process is resisted by local actors and community members living inside and outside the walled villages. The thesis further shows that processes of ABD and racial capitalism are intimately tied, responding to Robinson's call to recognize capitalism *as* racial capitalism (Robinson, 2000). That "capital can only be capital when it is accumulating and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups" (Melamed 2015, pg. 77). Moreover, this thesis also concludes that resistance is always embedded within structures of violence. That while modes of resistance highlight a weakening of capital, political emancipation is also fatally tied to "ordinary and excessively cruel racialized state violence" (Melamed 2015. Pg. 77). Broadly, this study highlights the political, material, affective and relational complexities within studies of urbanization, especially when landed relations meet capital.

In what follows, I first lay out an expansive conceptual framework for this study. The framework borrows from literature from across the global south to provide a way for us to think about the multiple ways in which dispossession happens and the particularities for the Malir case. Within this, questions of militarization, enclosure, enclavisation, securitization and racialization are imperative to explore. As I have stated above, these processes are always met with resistance and therefore, conceptually, I attempt to tie practices of resistance as relational and responsive to processes of ABD and Racial Capitalism. These are some of the many simultaneous processes shaping contemporary urbanization in Karachi. In chapter 3, I explicate on my methodological toolkit which is largely ethnographic. In this section I open up the question of field access, modes of arrival into BTK and the use of interviews, participant observation, archives and other methods that were used to build up this work. Chapter 4 goes into the context for Malir, its pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history, and the history of militarization in the district. It further develops context for the presence of BTK and other gated housing schemes emerging in the district and how they use racial logics of expropriation to meet their ends. In chapter 5, I open up the question of how BTK came to occupy a large part of Malir and how contemporary life is structured within. This chapter is divided in three sections to tell three interlaced stories. These are stories of how BTK occupied land, how it uses infrastructure to structure daily life for residents of walled villages inside, and responses to BTK's spatial control by local actors. Finally, in chapter 6, I conclude with the results of my study to highlight the interconnectedness of various and violent processes that are shaping contemporary urbanization in Karachi that shine light towards other broader processes of urbanization in the global south. This study overall aims to contribute to literature that seeks to use critical ethnographic methods and engages in decolonial critical thinking to understand the relationality of urban processes.

2. Conceptual Framework

Processes of dispossession play a central role in the accumulation of capital. Dispossession appears in many forms, often around systems and modes of building enclosures. These dynamics are often tied to land, which affects social and cultural production of everyday life for precarious and

vulnerable populations. While there has been significant scholarship within Marxist geography on the processes of primitive accumulation, there has been limited engagement in urban studies on how processes of ABD intersect with racial capitalism and various forms of resistance in the global south. For that reason, throughout this conceptual framework, I draw variously from scholarship on dispossession, racial and ethnic violence and resistance from the relevant disciplines and fields of anthropology, geography, post-colonial studies and urban studies. I use this conceptual framework as a literature review as well, as I define the three principle strands of literature I engage with to study my case: ABD, Racial Capitalism and Resistance. I pay particular attention to how scholars have approached questions of ABD and resistance in the global south, particularly in South Asia. In line with my research questions, I also bring in some literature on colonialism, militarization, land grabs and responses to these phenomena to tie together some of the various intersections concerning my case study.

I. Accumulation by Dispossession

In his famous account of primitive accumulation, Marx described the violent processes through which the capitalist mode of production, and the consequent social relations came into being by displacing peasants, enclosing land, and forging a proletariat class. However, in the 21st century, such dynamics and processes are far from over. Contemporary processes of land grabbing, real estate speculation, and infrastructure-led development continue to replicate these logics, albeit through new modalities. In the context of Karachi, these processes are manifest in large-scale urban development projects like BTK, where financialized and militarized mechanisms of land accumulation signal continuities with, but also departures from, classical forms of expropriation. Global literature on primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession (ABD), and forms of enclosure offers critical insights into the processes of urban transformation, displacement and resistance unfolding in Karachi. Drawing from Marxist geography and post-colonial studies this brief review foregrounds how theorists have debated, revised, and provincialized these concepts, offering a framework through which the case of Karachi can be situated within global regimes of dispossession and in global struggles for land.

Based on Marx's notion of primitive accumulation, David Harvey's (2004) "accumulation by dispossession" (ABD) provides the conceptual bridge between historical and contemporary expropriation. Harvey (2004) argues that when capital faces barriers to profitable reinvestment, often due to crises of overaccumulation, it turns toward dispossession as a strategy to reproduce itself. Dispossession thus becomes a systemic feature of neoliberal capitalism, taking the form of privatization, financialization, and commodification of land, services, and rights. Harvey's argument is particularly relevant in urban contexts like Karachi, where land serves as a key terrain of capital investment and accumulation. As speculative real estate development flourishes under military and bureaucratic patronage, Karachi's peripheries are transformed into lucrative spaces for elite accumulation, echoing Harvey's (2001) diagnosis of a "spatio-temporal fix" which is a temporary solution to capital's crises via geographical expansion and long-term infrastructural investment.

However, the abstraction in Harvey's theory has invited critique. Danish Khan (2025) in his analysis of Sheikhpura, Punjab, proposes a more grounded framework: "contested accumulations through displacement." Khan argues that Harvey's conceptualization risks flattening the

heterogeneity of dispossession across space and time. Instead, Khan urges a provincialization of ABD that attends to how infrastructural expansion, changes in land use, and socio-institutional arrangements produce differentiated outcomes of displacement. His insight that displacement can occur without overt violence, especially through state-enabled ground rent production and real estate speculation, maps directly onto the dynamics at play in Karachi. Here, in parallel to brute expropriation, it is also the soft coercion of legality, infrastructure, and development discourse that enables dispossession. Levine (2015), adding to the critique, argues that there is a need to understand how dispossession is politically organized. That is to say, that dispossession needs to be understood not only as an event, but rather a consequence of local political economic conditions that enable it. Here, he argues that it is better to understand the political organization of the distribution of land that comes under ‘regimes of dispossession’ where we are able to see how “dispossession becomes a form of coercive redistribution that states use to facilitate different forms of accumulation” (Pg. 147). He argues that while dispossession changes under different historical forms, it is ultimately a political process mediated by the state, which can therefore also be stopped. This is very clearly observed when we see that only recently, the state enacted its power to force a near complete shutdown of BTK, shutting down its bank accounts, and seizing its assets (N. Khan 2025). This recent development, however, has nothing to do with the benevolence of the state to protect its citizens against capitalist forces but rather to carry forward its own political agendas.

Dispossession and Militarization

Levine (2015) also argues that Harvey’s theory of accumulation by dispossession, while having expanded Marx’s conceptualization of primitive accumulation by adding contemporary forms of dispossessory processes in various geopolitical contexts, is a process primarily informed by the functional response to over accumulated capital. Levine contends and states that more than simply a functional response, ABD is a politically organized process of state redistribution. Similarly, for scholars like De Angelis (2004) and Brenner & Schmid (2015), dispossession is a process that is determined by a class struggle that is political in nature and not merely circuits of capital, arguing that the function of the state is central to dispossessory processes. This is to pose the question that why do capitalists need states to dispossess land for them, and why do states do it? ‘Dispossession requires a state that is willing and able to use its monopoly over the means of violence to expropriate land from certain classes to the benefit of certain others’ (Levien 2015 Pg. 149). While Levine speaks through the case of India, the processes of postcolonial administrative and neoliberal regimes hold much relevance to Pakistan, owing to a shared colonial history. In Levine’s story, India had passed from a regime that dispossessed land for state-led infrastructural and industrial expansion until 1991 to one that dispossessed land for private gains, increasingly financial-capital thereafter. This holds true for Pakistan as it introduced its own economic liberalization reforms in the early part of the 21st century (Anwar 2018). However, as Arif Hasan (2015; 2013) and Ayesha Siddiqi (2016) note, the Pakistani political context has a layered history of militarism in the postcolonial moment, in ways that are not represented in India. The field of military capital and control therefore seeps into the modalities of dispossession, to the extent that there may be a need for a reformulation of the political capacities of the redistributive intentions of dispossession of land by the state, and there may arise a need to understand dispossession in contexts like Pakistan as organized by militaristic regimes of dispossession. Here the state holds statutory, ceremonial power, but the military and militarized classes become the prime benefactors of the process of ABD. This is to say that when redistributive capacities are held by the deep-state military government, then the contestations between corporate capitalists, landed elite and political

classes becomes more entangled in the ways in which dispossession is organized and articulated. This also forms a hierarchy of benefactors of dispossession, where the military elite often get the first pick. In Pakistan, nearly all gated housing communities have military enclaves and special military zones, often in the form of reserved military plots for retired officials (Nasir 2014). Similarly, most political, corporate elite, and bureaucratic positions of power are also often held by serving or retired military officials (Siddiq 2016). The aids to dispossession thus, are organized through the redistributive capacities of the military more than the state in countries like Pakistan. Of course, one can see the collapsing of state and military rule into one another as well. An expanded version of this line of argumentation could also urge us to think about how all capital, especially today, under the increased threat and presence of war, moves through military insurgency and through military might. Capital therefore, is tied to the military industrial complex as much as it is directed through the state. Of course, one can argue vice versa as well, that capitalism and militarism are historically intertwined, in the way that one facilitates and perpetuates the other. As I will show in Chapter 5, militaristic regimes of dispossession are consequently also tied to modes of securitization, which come as an expansion of the original understanding of ABD. This means that the many dynamics that are involved within the process of militarization, importantly securitization, are central to the organization of dispossession.

Enclosures

One element of capitalist relation-making that militarization has used, given that militarization is itself a form of urban and capitalist relation-making, is the formation and use of enclosures and enclaves. Enclosures and enclaves can mean different things, but they can also be amorphous entities, taking the shape, intention and spatializing themselves in the image of one another. Since my field site is riddled with walls, whether encircling the enclave of BTK itself or in the creation of smaller walled compounds in the form of villages, enclosures, or the process of “enclosing” land becomes an important feature of urbanization and development in Malir. Vasudevan et al. (2008) in their review of spaces of enclosure attempt to expand the notion by introducing ‘enclosure’ as a complex historico-geographical formation that operates along various contextually specific logics of ‘inclusion and exclusion’, where the ‘tensions of enclosures are themselves dialectically counterposed’ (Pg. 1642). According to them, enclosures speak not only to the ‘vagaries of primitive accumulation and statist and para-statist violence, but also to the messy, practical and highly conflicting reclaiming of the commons’ (Vasudevan et al. Pg. 1644). As this thesis will further show, it is evident in the ways in which villages in Malir respond to the mega development of BTK as an enclosing entity. In their conflicting and often messy ways of opening, closing and breaking down walls, the responses and contested interactions between village populations inside BTK exemplify the changing ways in which the social and material processes of enclosing territories and populations produces conflicting dynamics of urbanization and land-use. Furthermore, Vasudevan et al. (2008) go on to state that an expanded notion of enclosures also requires an understanding of the spatialities of inclusion and exclusion that ‘operate across networks and territories that require connecting logics and processes of neoliberal restructuring, military violence, and modes of appropriation, manipulation and exploitation at different scales, including the corporeal’ (Pg. 1644). Their theorization identifies thus, the need to position dispossession at the intersection of various socio-political and historical processes of accumulation.

While much literature focuses on how enclosures and the process of ABD aids development, scholars elsewhere have identified these processes also as enabling a certain kind of de-development. In a study of No-Go Zones of Gaza, Smith and Isleem (2017) ethnographically study how Israel's siege of Gaza enables a kind of land occupation that removes its primary mode, that is the settlement, as the facilitator of land takeover. They show how Israel uses military force to occupy land that is unsettled. Along the border wall between Israel and Gaza, a section of the land belonging to the Gazan population is deemed as the No Go Zone, where farming is disallowed for the Palestinians. Such No Go Zones also exist in the West Bank. However, while in the West Bank these zones are allowed to be farmed on by the settlers, in Gaza, the "No Go Zones are off limits to the Palestinians and there are no settlers within the borders of the strip to take advantage of the takings" (Smith and Isleem 2017, pg. 451). Their study has shown how the Israeli military often sets fire to the farms, harvests are bombed and targeting killing of farmers is used to keep the Gazan population off the grounds of the No Go Zones. This prevents any kind of independent economic development for Gaza, and through military means, these zones are used to debilitate and collapse the Gazan economy. They state that the siege represents a 'break with past Israeli reliance on inexpensive Palestinian labor for undesired and under-compensated work' which renders the Gazans as surplus to the Israeli economy (Smith and Isleem 2017, pg. 451). Colloquially known, and familiarly termed, the world's largest open-air prison, Gaza becomes the site of enclosure that represents the shifting technological use of military capitalism through the use of what Vasudevan et al. (2008) call 'military neoliberalism'. However, despite the military violence, the Gazan population continues to farm on these lands, despite the risk, the resistant ideology of 'Sumud' that has historically maintained the effort to stake claims to the No Go Zones as Gazan land represents a form of resistance to the 'metabolic rift' that Israel continues to impose (Smith and Isleem 2017).

Literature on militarization, enclosures and resistance is rife with what Tilly and Tarrow (2015) call "contentious politics". In the context of Congo, Verweijen (2017) looks at how increasing commodification of mining, meaning the incoming of large-scale industries from the global north to mine in Congo has led to a militarized response in the shape of land take over since much of the eastern Congolese population depend on artisanal mining. However, she also shows that these very militarized responses, often organized from within populations, also tend to appropriate entrepreneurial logics to demand increased contributions that allows mining companies to settle in the region. The interconnectedness of Congo's militarized political-economic order and the interplay between resistance and industrial mining allows us to see how political performance and repertoires of resistance are shaped by a convolution of power-state-military-capitalist nexus. He highlights this complexity to reflect on the range of processes shaping land takeover along the social-political relations that military-capitalist interactions engender. Verweijen (2017) also shows how much of this struggle is rooted in colonialism as many of the mining companies come from Belgium, therefore a relation of expropriation is maintained along a historical juncture. Similar instances come from a research conducted by Cabrera Pacheco (2017), who studied the Maya population of the Yucatan in Mexico and their 'solar,' an indigenous housing system at risk due to the increasing global marketization of land. She argues that there is a need to look at the conditions under which people are forced to depend on market relations. In her work we see how Latin American governments collude with transnational companies to impose certain 'predatory' practices of appropriation that give way to changing living conditions under capitalism (Cabrera Pacheco 2017). Particularly, she argues that while ABD is understood as an extension of primitive

accumulation, the more recent waves of global trade networks at their effects on local populations need to be understood also as ‘neo-extractivism’ which she defines as a new wave of colonial extractivist process. This, she refers to under the conditions where people are coerced into capitalist relations to bring them into the ‘market’ as participants of the neoliberal economic order. She also looks at the historical relation between indigenous populations in Latin America and the colonial enclaves that Angotti (2013) has long theorized, to show how indigenous populations have, across the breadth of time, become produced in relation to a consistent struggle against enclosures and enclaves. Therefore, much to the reflection of scholars elsewhere and in line with a historical precedent, a quiet form of resistance continues, where the Maya continue to take up small pieces of land to shape the solars that they were evicted from, through informal practices.

The cases from Gaza, Congo, Yucatan and elsewhere all exemplify a global trend of land occupation through dispossessory means, and it is clearly reflected in the mega developmental efforts of real estate companies like BTK. The case for BTK and the villages inside is interesting precisely because we can borrow from, and reflect through, the various iterations and forms of dispossessions, its causes, effects and responses, in a globally cognizant way. Malir then, as a case study, allows us to open up questions of how land occupation happens through brutal military operations, corporate capital, neoliberal restructuring and colonial extractivism, and then also shows how resistance to said dynamics come together to negotiate survival.

Here I also want to briefly link literature on enclaves to enclosures and how processes of securitization are equal stakeholders in capitalist regeneration and processes of dispossession, especially in the global south. In their thesis on ‘splintering urbanism’ Graham and Marvin (2001) suggest that enclaves materialize to facilitate circulation of goods, people and information within a secure environment. However, such processes are often propelled by “colonial histories of urban fragmentation, current trends of globalization and deregulation, imperatives of securitization or a combination of these factors” (Kaker 2013, pg. 3). In creating safe havens, cities that are shaped by violence often resort to enclave making as an attempt to restore security. Therefore, the inclusion and exclusion of social relations within and through enclaves becomes visible through the lens of violence or the degree of crime. Because of this, enclaved spaces have also been compared to a “new form of apartheid which include sites that spatialize biopolitics, build a climate of fear and perpetuate segregation based on socio-economic differences” (Kaker 2013, pg. 3). Sobia Kaker (2013), in her study of enclaves in Karachi argues that enclave-making needs to be seen as a relational process that allows for a ‘continuum of violence’. This, she argues, is done by creating “the conditions that engender structural violence, where enclavization, as process, perpetuates violence that is manifested by the politics of control and repressive state policies”. Hiba Bou Akar and Mona Fawaz (2012), similarly look at the politics of insecurity and enclave making as a relational process in Beirut, and argue for a need to understand violence as structured within the processes and efforts that seek to ‘secure’ the city. Along these efforts, the common feature remains the dispossession of the marginalized being the ones to be outcast from these enclaves as presumed agents of violence. This projection concerns not only a class-based differentiation but also along lines of ethnicity, race and caste.

II. Racial Capitalism

Across this literature, one thing that runs like a red thread, is the marking of distinctions between populations. Whether it is populations that are colonized, securitized, enclosed, controlled or manipulated in messy negotiations between powerful actors, there is a degree of separation of who is exploited, feared and oppressed versus who exploits, engenders fear and oppresses. This distinction, in many cases, is marked along, racial, ethnic, classed and gendered lines. However, instead of collapsing class along other markers of distinction, I would argue, through forthcoming literature, that class struggles are played out in and through racial, ethnic, caste based and gendered differences (Chhabria 2023; 2018; Akhtar 2023; Akhter 2022). For the purposes of this thesis, and in relevance to my research question, I will more explicitly focus on literature that looks at how ethnicity and race play a crucial role in the differentiation of populations and how their exploitation is used as a tool to further neoliberal restructuring and capitalist regeneration, given various other intersections.

Nancy Fraser (2018) borrowing heavily from literature on Black Marxism, anti-imperialist critical theory, Marxist geography and subaltern studies, draws out an expanded conception of capitalism. She states that “capitalism must be understood as a form of social organizing that is primed to divide populations by nation and race” (Fraser 2018, pp. 16). Presenting a historiography of capitalism, she makes the case that capital has always sought out populations that it exploits and populations that it expropriates. That is to say, the exploited are those who are able to mediate their labor through a wage contract, whereas the expropriated are those who cannot. Not foregoing the conditions that make either populations possible, she presents an account that foregrounds ‘empire’ and ‘race’ as entangled contingencies through which one can see the ‘subjection of those whom capital expropriates as the hidden condition of possibility for the freedom of those whom it exploits’ (Fraser 2018, pg. 18). By this she marks the difference between laborers for instance in Europe, versus the ‘native’ and ‘enslaved’ bodies of the colony. Elsewhere, scholars have theorized these historical junctures within conceptualizations of convergences among necropolitical and biopolitical economic orders (Cadenasso et al. 2022; Mbembe 2003; McIntyre and Nast 2011). Nonetheless, Fraser’s central argument, that the production of racial difference for expropriation, and the ways in which colonial administrations administered the manufacturing of this difference in the colonies, shows us how the production of race, ethnicity and nation is a long historical process tied to the history of capitalism. She further argues that in the postcolonial moment, strategies of expropriation and exploitation were in many ways, handed over to postcolonial states and transnational firms. This meant that developmental strategies entailed, because of various historical and political reasons, states to expropriate their own ‘indigenous’ populations. The main distinction between the colonial and postcolonial moment in relation to a history of capitalism, is the form of dispossession entangled with notions of race and ethnicity. In postcolonial nation states like India, Pakistan, Brazil, Chile, South Africa etc. racial and ethnic differences are seen as employable features for capitalist accumulation and dispossession (Salcedo and Torres 2004; Levien 2015; Suhail and Lutfi 2016; Roy 2009; Gururani 2019; Akhter 2022; Melgaço and Xavier Pinto Coelho 2022). In contemporary colonial states like Israel, race and ethnicity become ever more visible as features of the violence of capitalism (Fields 2024; Yiftachel 2020). These processes and histories therefore, produce what Cedric Robinson (2000) has famously termed the modern economic order of ‘racial capitalism’, which demands that the history and contemporary nature of capitalism to be seen as dependent on slavery, violence, genocide and

imperialism. In the same vein, Fraser (2018) also urges us to see that the ‘centrality of racism and imperialism to capitalism’s history has fatefully shaped the grammar of struggle with and against it’ (pg. 33). Movements like Black Power, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Baloch Yakjehti Committee and the Haitian revolution for instance, can all be seen as a response to racial capitalism (Suhail and Lutfi 2016; Levien 2015; Simone 2016). As can be identified from earlier literature as well, the Congolese population, the Gazans against Israel or the Maya against the Mexican state, all have very visibly identified racial and ethno-political struggles attached to landed social capitalist relations. In relation to racial capitalism, Jodi Melamed (2015) provides an interesting framework to expand on Robinson, Gilmore and Fraser’s arguments where she turns to neoliberalism as an economic order that has rendered visible and brought to representation, indigeneity. She argues that bringing indigeneity within the folds of racial capitalism is a way for us to understand the continuation of dispossession processes as they newly emerge again, especially in the wake of post-2008 financialization (in relation to public debt etc.) and new land seizures in settler colonial democracies like the United States and Canada. Indigeneity has similarly constituted the framework of resistance for much of Malir’s population, as is evident by the creation of SIRA.

Race, Colonialism and War

In the case of Pakistan, literature has largely focused on the interconnectedness of colonialism, imperialism and its emergent dynamics within postcolonial governance, especially in how notions of nationhood, become embedded in infrastructural politics that shape cities and their on goings (Anwar 2018; Rehman et al. 2023; Akhter et al. 2022; Akhtar 2022; Akhtar 2023; Akhter and Al Faruq 2025; Akhtar and Rashid 2021; Siddiq 2007; Hasan 2019; Abdullah et al. 2021; Khan 2025; Tassadiq 2024; Gayer 2007). Land, upon which urbanization takes place, becomes governed through a multifaceted nexus of history of colonialism, militarization, classed, gendered and racialized production of vulnerable populations, the uneven formation of middle and upper classes and regional ethnicities, and struggles against dispossession. In such a setting rife with contestations, ethnicity, as a featuring logic of racialization, is often foregrounded in everyday discourse, highlighting the importance of ethnicity in class based political struggles. Pakistan also has a chequered history of ethno-racial capitalism, where multiple identities have, over the course of time, become collapsed, distinct, differentiated and erased along many historical events, such as the partition of India, mass migration into Karachi, independence of Bangladesh, the cold war, military coup in Myanmar and the war on terror (Akhter et al. 2022; Akhtar and Rashid 2021). As Akhter et al. (2022) point out, such a dense history requires a global conjunctural approach to understand its many features. For the purposes of this thesis then, let us turn briefly to some literature on Karachi and the Baloch.

When speaking of Karachi, most literature either focuses on processes of urbanization or the vagaries of violence connected to economic, infrastructural and political changes (Hasan 2019; Kaker 2013; Nasir 2014; Hasan 2015; Haque 2024; Chhabria 2019; Gayer 2007). Given that it is the largest city of Pakistan, and one of the most populated cities in the world, it demands some degree of historical analysis too. Adeem Suhail and Aameem Lutfi (2016) use the lens of the history of partition to study Karachi, and their anthropological subject of study being the Baloch of Karachi. They argue that literature on the Baloch solely focuses on the Baloch as a homogenous ethnic group concerning the province of Balochistan, and that literature on partition often keeps Karachi and Sindh as a mere mention in its long history. These scholars show how the Baloch

were a diverse ethnic group, constituting multitudes, and how their social and political functions changed between British rule and post-partition. Karachi, because it sits at the border between Sindh and Balochistan, has had a historical link with Baloch populations. In fact, it was part of the Khanate of Kalat until 1795 before it was colonized by the British. The city was firmly integrated into the fishing economy of the Makran coast and was populated by the Baloch from the coast. In fact, many of the Makrani slaves who escaped the Sultanate of Oman arrived in Karachi and were firmly integrated and recognised as Baloch. Over the years, as British rule intensified, the separation of populations along lines of religion, caste and ethnicity/race became ever more integrated into labor relationships. Suhail and Lutfi (2016) show how the Baloch in Karachi had adapted to the changing labor conditions and had mostly formed the working classes of the city who would farm in Malir, and form living quarters in Lyari as they were employed in British building projects across the city. They were constituted nonetheless as the ‘black’ population of the city, separate from the ‘white’ mercantile Hindu Sindhi, Gujarati and Parsi populations (Gayer 2007). However, with partition and incoming migration into the city, the Baloch found themselves on the lowest rung of a changing social and economic order. With increased competition for labor from educated migrants, the Baloch were sequestered further away from labor work and devolved into marginal populations in the city’s peripheries. Moreover, as Suhail and Lutfi (2016) show, the Baloch population became homogenized by the Pakistani nation state into one ethnicity concerning the province of Balochistan and those who inhabited Karachi were, over time, plunged into despair.

III. Responses and Resistance to Capitalism and Occupation

Extending the conversation on racial capitalism and dispossession to account for resistance, I want to momentarily return to Fraser’s comment that the “centrality of racism and imperialism to capitalism’s history has shaped the grammar of struggle within and against it” (pg. 33). Her theoretical contribution opens up a range of questions about the ways in which anti-capitalist struggle is shaped under racialized and imperialized social, cultural and economic conditions. Keeping this in mind, literature on land grabbing and struggle against it, has long assumed the process to be a dyad, where land is taken over by state and corporate interests, and what are referred to as ‘local communities’ engage in ‘resistance’. However, scholars like Hall et al. (2015) ask us to rethink this binary cause-effect relationship to account for, empirically, what happens on the ground, as a far more varied and complex process of negotiations, negations, incorporations and other reactions. They argue that when ‘land deals hit the ground, they interact with social groups within the state and in society that are differentiated along lines of gender, generation, ethnicity, race and nationality, and have historically specific expectation, aspirations and traditions of struggle’ and therefore, we must account for the various ways in which this shapes, limits and propels different kinds of political reactions ‘from below’ (Pg. 468). Resistance, according to them, is also an assumption, where it is viewed as an exception against ‘inaction’ that is the presumed norm. Therefore, they suggest the use of ‘reactions’ as a suitable conceptualization that accounts for the variations in different contexts. This framing is useful for the purposes of this thesis as it considers the various ways in which villages respond to BTK’s takeover of land in Malir, that even within one geographical context, the responses and reactions to land grabbing can differ widely from one person, village and group to another.

Within critical agrarian studies and peasant studies, scholars from across the Global South have drawn attention to the ways in which people react to land grabs. Most commonly, for instance, the

confrontations between affected villagers and the state have been studied in the context of organized national mobilizations by agrarian movements such as the one in the Philippines between 2006-2007 when the state allocated 1.4 million hectares of land to Chinese investors, or the case of Indian Farmer's protests between 2020-2021 and again, more recently in 2024-2025, where the farmers opposed the Farm Bills that would strip away their rights to contest market prices (Hall et al. 2015). In both, the case of Philippines and India, farmers organized against corporate takeover of farming practice including contract farming. Scholars have shown that this form of mobilization responds to the classed and identarian struggles that emerge under the production of 'new value chains' in changing agrarian economies (Hall et al. 2015). These new value chains center the corporate takeover of agrarian territories for the mass production of harvest. Cases from Madagascar, Mozambique and Brazil also present similar insights where everyday forms of peasant politics or individual protests are directed at the local state bureaucracy and the corporate elite, or a combination of the two (Hall et al. 2015; Lesutis 2019; Bin 2024). Another form of reaction that some scholars have studied is to take into account the role of alliances that affected people make with state and non-state actors in order to advance their claims. Grajales (2015), in the case of Colombia shows how 'external allies who are often elites themselves, such as legal experts who know national and international laws are hired to reinforce subaltern claims. Moreover, agrarian groups like affected villagers frequently also find allies among other social justice movement such as labor, women's, environmental, food and human rights movements. This is particularly true for the case of some movements in Malir that have sought alliances with Karachi's housing rights movements (Karachi Bachao Tehreek), Sindh's nationalist movements (Sindhudesh Movement) and Balochistan's humanitarian movements (Baloch Yakjehti Committee).

Beyond resistance through alliances and organized protests, several scholars show how people in diverse situations use the 'language of rights and legal institutions to advance their struggles' (Hall et al. pg. 478). While many postcolonial states either do not have adequate protections for customary and informal land tenure or rely still on colonial land laws that explicitly violate human rights principles. While the absence or inadequacy of land laws have either been used to justify land takeover by the state or has been mobilized to strengthen laws that benefit the corporate elite while de-developing the poor, scholars show that people in different contexts have been able to, at certain instances, meaningfully resist displacement by asserting ownership and control through collective action. Grajales (2015) shows how collective organizing in the Lower Atrato region of Colombia helped farmers win collective land rights. Similarly, Gingembre (2015) shows that in Madagascar, where legal ownership is less important, claims to land were asserted based on customary local discourses and identities. In a similar vein, Brent (2015) shows how the Argentinian state restricted foreign land ownership in the wake of concerns over land appropriations from the locals. However, despite customary land ownerships and rights-based responses to land grabs, corporate and political elite nonetheless grab significant amounts of land, incomparable to that which is saved by locals, villagers and affected people.

The literature on land, dispossession, racial capitalism and resistance suggests that these are interconnected processes happening transnationally, the logics of which tie all these struggles together under the projects of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. While there is growing literature on the impacts of land deals and responses to it, there is still little empirical work for cases like Malir, where the many processes, impacts, consequences and challenges that come with land grabs and dispossessions coalesce into a messy field of historical and contemporary

arrangement of life. Here, the gap this thesis intends to fill is, to study what happens in the aftermath of development, when the project of development (BTK) is mostly finished; when the land has been taken over; when the enclosures are built and walls erected. How do people adjust to their new realities, how do they continue to resist as part of their new reality? And how do they reflect on legal, institutional, structural, historical and racialized processes that shaped their reality. While scholars like Nausheen Anwar (2018), Shahana Rajani & Zahra Malkani (2019) and some others have written about and worked on Malir and BTK in the wake of the land grab and the violence that ensued, I attempt to extend their work into making visible what is happening today.

This brief literature highlights the need to understand race and its organization around colonial and postcolonial socio-demographic changes as instituting changes in the relationship that race and ethnicity draws with capitalism along spatial and temporal junctures as well. In postcolonial Pakistan, it was now the Punjabi military and bureaucratic elite that held the power of governance, and the Baloch population relegated to the margins and thrown under conditions that Yiftachel (2020) calls 'displaceability'. Taking these accounts, Uzma Ansari (2022) identifies that the 'formations of a racialized identity went hand-in-hand with a political economy that fully integrated north-west India (now Pakistan) in world capitalism, imbricating the colonial matrix of power onto postcolonial governance' (Pg. 4). While her research focuses on how the 'production of race and control of the economy, as opposed to ethnic or cultural localism, became the determining factors of the formation of the Pakistani nation state' (pg. 4), I would contend that race and ethnicity have, between colonialism and postcoloniality, at least in the South Asian context, been porous markers used and conflated into one another for various capitalistic and dispossessory intentions. Bringing BTK back into the conversation, as this thesis will show in some of the forthcoming findings, ethnic differences between the construction workers who BTK employs and the Baloch-Sindh residents of villages experience are often dictated by the logics of race and racial difference. Spatially, the divide between the villages and BTK, especially enforced through walls, is reminiscent of what Du Bois termed, the 'color line' (Mullen 2016). Elsewhere, speaking through Cederic Robinson and Theresa Caldeira, Lorena Malgaco and Luna Xavier Pinto Coelho (2022) look at how similar processes unfold in South Africa and Brazil, where planning, especially that concerning 'development' of cities, is highly informed by and oriented towards a kind of urbanization that rests on Black dispossession and the protection of White property.

Across this literature, we can see how processes of ABD, grow in, with and towards an expansion of capitalist functioning that have historically used race and ethnicity under colonialism, and contemporarily use these differences for neoliberal economic restructuring. The case of the Baloch in Malir, inside villages inside the enclosure/enclave of BTK provide us with a way to view contemporary processes of dispossession in light of the various, historically accumulated burdens of violence and expropriation. This case also highlights that as postcolonial nation states embark on their developmental journeys to capitalism, and as they institute new economic liberalization reforms, a consequent expansion of racial and ethnic difference emerges within the globally expanding geography of racial capitalism (Chhabria 2023).

3. Methodology

This thesis is based on 10 months of ethnographic field work carried out in Malir, Karachi between February and December 2024. Below I expand on my methodological approach, detail reasons for

case selection, accessing the field and comment on my positionality, ethical considerations and limitations of this work along with methods of analysis.

I. Case selection: Why Malir and why BTK?

My research site is divided between three villages, HAMG, ADG and DGG. These villages are all walled inside the walled enclave of BTK. However, these are among the many more walled and dispossessed villages, as is shown in the map below (see fig. 2). The choice of these villages is intentional as they host the largest population demographics from across all village enclaves inside BTK. Concerning data gathering and an appropriate sample size, these villages seemed like the appropriate choice for study. Moreover, these were also villages that I was first put in touch with by Hafeez and later Akhter Baloch, who is another leading voice in SIRA. Akhter has been working on making maps of dispossessions, and some of the maps included in this thesis were provided to me by him.

I take up Malir as a site of study for two broad reasons. Firstly, it is the largest and primarily agricultural district of Karachi with the lowest population density. This means that Malir can and has been, used as a geographic space that enables Karachi's continued urban expansion. While colloquially termed as the 'lungs of Karachi' due to its vegetation, the size of Malir allows for projects like BTK, DHA, Malir Expressway and several others to materialize. Because of its agrarian status, it also hosts the largest amounts of villages in the city. The size and rapidly shifting use of this district makes it an important territory of study to understand the global processes of agrarian-urban changes. Academically, it responds to Shubra Gururani's (2019) argument that the 'agrarian is the urban question' where for too long the rural and agrarian has been seen as outside of the realms of the urban, but spaces like Malir would say otherwise. In that it challenges dominant modes of epistemological and spatial inquiries about the urban. Secondly, the district of Malir was only formed in 1996 under the bifurcation of the Karachi Division to enter municipal administrative regimes. Its district status was revoked in 2000 and restored in 2011. These changes highlight Malir's administrative importance in Karachi's city-making and city-administration practices. This policy directly coincides with the SLGO (See chapters 4 & 5) that effectively reconstituted land in Karachi under neoliberal policies at the turn of the 21st century. This means that Malir was construed as an important space for territorial experimentation to facilitate neoliberalization because of the ease with which policy could be changed in a sparsely populated formerly agrarian territory. BTK and its predatory capitalistic practices are then manifestations and exercises in advancing the neoliberalization of Karachi. These two reasons are tied together and make the study of Malir urgent in understanding global trends of development and the ways in which state and non-state actors are embedded in these processes.

BTK, as is stated in the introduction, is part of a chain of housing schemes developed by Malik Riaz. Malik Riaz, as the wealthiest man of Pakistan, and as the owner of the Bahria Town Pvt Ltd is a major corporate force who is rapidly changing the shape of urbanization in the country. BTK is the Karachi iteration of the company and is located in Malir. Given the status of Malir, and the administrative contestations present within, it becomes important to study the district's interaction with a major developer and the changes and reactions such an interaction induces. Brought together, the district and the developer are two large drivers of Karachi's urbanization and are two actors that can be viewed as mammoth features of Karachi's socio-spatial and economic landscape.

Therefore, studying Malir and BTK becomes a site of questions on emergent flows of global capital, resistance and dispossession that rest on historical and contemporary processes. In that, the villages walled within BTK provide an opening into inquiries about what is at stake in the prospect of developing land and modernizing Karachi. Who gets marginalized and lost, why and how? Moreover, while this thesis focuses on three villages, it is important to recognize that they are not the only ones caught in BTK's sprawling geography. BTK continues to expand into the Kirthar mountain range and across more territory, swallowing up lands with similar logics and greater scale. This study is therefore both specific and indicative, a local case that reveals much about global processes of dispossession, enclosure, militarization, and resistance under racial capitalism.

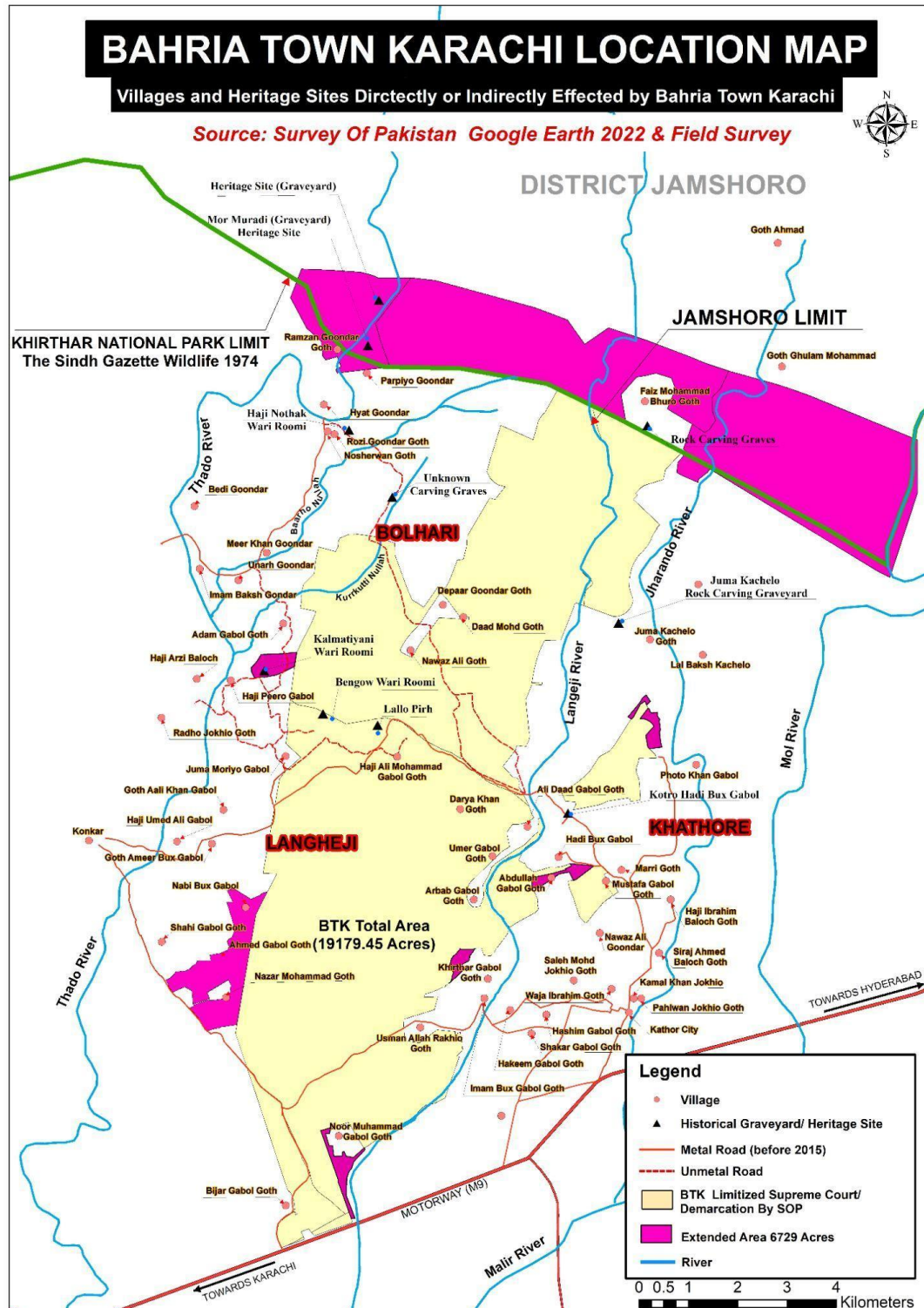


Figure 2 (Akhter Hussain, 2022) Map of BTK. This map was produced by Akhter Baloch, member of SIRA, that shows the affected locations and contestations of land against BTK's occupation of the region. It shows the precise locations of the villages and the extensions BTK is currently reaching for, trespassing the Malir District and extending excavation into the Kirthar National Park.

II. Accessing the field

Atreyee Majumder (2018) in a brief essay on ‘fieldwork and the native informant’, critically examines, through Spivak, how anthropologists think through the field and what it means to enter the field as a native anthropologist. According to her, the violence of ‘entering’ the field continues to render populations as ‘objects of knowledge’ and remains within colonialist operating logics. Upon ‘accessing the field’ I was faced with the question of what my role is, as a researcher who went to study abroad and is in search of a ‘field’ upon his return home. How can I demand an access into the lives of those who are at the margins of political life? What does it mean to reduce the expanse of life of farmers in Malir, to the narrow terminology of the ‘field’? Grappling with these questions, I returned to Spivak’s advice, to learn to live with ‘contradictory instructions,’ which is to say, that daily life for most of us is directed through a series of contradictions. Therefore, my position as a ‘native researcher’ contradictorily informs my research writing, positionality and simultaneously my complicity. Of course, in accessing BTK, and the villages I am asserting and affirming many things, while signifying a ‘class continuity’ that ‘others’ the marginalized. In ‘accessing the field’ thus, I access these contradictions and render them visible.

I want to briefly first position myself within Malir. I first visited Malir properly in 2021 on a tour organized by Yasir Darya, who leads the Climate Action Center in Karachi. The tour was based around a site visit of the climatic destruction propelled by the Malir Expressway Project, a 39 km highway project that cut through various farms and villages, and the Malir river, in the district. This project was supported by the Pakistani state and various corporate actors. I saw firsthand, the destruction of the Malir river and dispossession of many villages enabled by this project. Initially my intention for this thesis was to study the expressway and its environmental impacts.

Across my years in Karachi, Malir came up many times in conversations with friends, activists and researchers, especially in relation to the construction of BTK. Artists Shahana Rajani and Zahra Malkani (2019) had already worked on the initial dispossessions happening in Malir, especially concerning indigenous land in their publication, *Exhausted Geographies*. Hafeez Baloch similarly came up in conversations around Malir, as an active voice in the struggle against the many development projects taking place. Upon visiting the site of the Expressway in February 2024, I met with Hafeez Baloch to begin my investigation. However, upon meeting him, he challenged me to think about dispossessions that no one else is talking about. He asked me if I had ever been inside BTK, and I said no. He then proceeded to take me inside, and directed me to study the processes shaping lives of villages inside. In order to ground my research in the directions of those who live in the region and lead the struggles, I adopted his advice. His direction shaped my methodology significantly, because it allowed me to let this research be informed and guided by the struggles of those who are from the land. Therefore, this research is rooted in a methodological approach known as ‘subaltern geopolitics’ which privileges the voices of those most marginalized (Sharp, 2011). According to this approach, those most marginalized are best suited to explain politics. Hence, beyond methodology, such an approach also invokes a critical epistemological inquiry that urges us to think from and with the field.

The field, therefore opened in many ways. It opened through instances of borrowed language, through clever truths and at times through a shutting out and closing off. The field here, was not only the villages and BTK itself, but also those farms and villages outside of BTK. My

engagements took me beyond the smaller gates of BTK and outside it in order to look at BTK, not only from the highway but also from the other sides that regular passersby don't see. In engaging with farmers along the walls of BTK, I learnt about other processes and histories of occupation. This is yet another limitation of my work, an unfulfilled engagement with these sites and people.

Materially, my access into BTK was directed through the main gate, in a car, often on the lookout for people who I could talk to. I went around the enclave, asking people if they knew of villages, the names that I had gathered, and through that information, I proceeded with conversations that were sometimes brief and other times long and engaging. Access into the field therefore, was multiply produced in moments of interaction along the sidewalks, inside homes, in shops, passing by walls, and in some cases, even in the rejection to access conversations.

III. Ethnography

To understand the lived experiences of village residents I was drawn towards qualitative methods that make visible various forms of social relations. The reason I use ethnography as a method is because village populations inside BTK are located beyond normative structures that constitute urban life in Karachi. That is say, that these populations are enclosed and walled in a manner that they are not immediately visible or identifiable. One has to go look, travel and investigate inside the expanse of BTK to be able to find these villages. Another reason for using ethnography is the present fact that these villages are under threat of erasure. They are sparingly registered on census records and their locations are not made visible in BTK's infrastructural arrangement. This means, there are no signs, posts and location markers that signal the presence of these villages inside the gated compound. The population that lives inside these villages are similarly elusive and are arranged in a manner that designs their exclusion from visible space. Therefore, an ethnographic method is useful to bring to light that which remains hidden. In the pursuit to speak to the village residents and locate their spaces, talk to them about dispossession and local modes of resistance, I had to use multiple ways of approach. I make use of ethnography here by placing myself within the field, that is going into village spaces inside and outside BTK, and establishing contact and rapport with residents of villages so that I would be able to understand their story.



Figure 3 (Author, 2024) View of BTK from beyond a wall.

Since BTK is an urban story, I deploy urban ethnographic methods as well, where the use of infrastructure and space is dominantly positioned. The villages inside BTK are surrounded by urbanization, spatially through the construction of roads, walls, buildings and towers; and administratively through laws, rules, patrolling, land deeds and sanctions. An engagement with the material and social life of the villages within BTK's operating dynamics could only happen through a deeper ethnographic engagement with my participants and my field site. Urban ethnography is a multifaceted methodology that incorporates long form interviews, long term engagement with participants and the use of various visual and spatial methods. Therefore, it is a suitable method to understand the everyday lived experiences of people, as they interact with the built environment and changing socio-spatial arrangements around them. I say this with deep cognizance, that ethnography, while suitable to reveal some information, cannot abstain from the perpetuation of inequalities that emerge between researcher and participant. Although anthropologists have long argued for the assemblage of ethnographic methods as those that come close to encountering the participant at 'eye level' but many have dispelled this as a myth that only perpetuates an epistemic inequality (Baumann et al. 2024). In my use of ethnography, I consistently tried to give voice to the residents of villages to tell their own stories in the ways and manners they wanted to. Their expressions, language and sentiments were centered in my approach. I also stepped back and let them direct me into places that I would have otherwise ignored, including them in every part of the ethnographic process. Moreover, in line with ethnographic methods, I attempted to mix several methods, such as putting interviews and participant observation in conversation with maps and archival records that I accessed and using investigative news articles to back interview quotes.

IV. Data Collection: Methods and Analysis

With a focus on the lived experiences of my research participants and how their life building practices interact with and respond to processes of dispossession and racialization, this research

relies mostly on qualitative methods. As noted above, this qualitative methodology orients itself through the use of ethnography that helps gather grounded data that is rooted in and informed by, everyday modes of resisting, (ir)regular interactions with BTK and meaning making. As such, this thesis first builds a contextual analysis in Chapter 3 that brings together data collected from archives, secondary sources, participant observations, informal conversations and literature review. The historical colonial processes discussed in the context chapter are further developed in conversation with contemporary dispossession dynamics shaping Malir in chapter 5.

Below I have provided a detailed review of my use of various modes of data collection. This includes participant observation, semi-structured interviews, some archival research, mapping and the use of secondary sources. I then provide a review of how I analyze this data for the purposes of this investigation.

Participant Observation

The form that the research for this thesis took was often unstructured. My observations were structured and conducted primarily through driving and walking along the vast expanse of BTK. In line with the impulse to ‘expose’ myself to the on-goings inside BTK, I observed its various gates, the sites of walling, sites of construction and its residue, the by-passing trucks and tractors carrying construction materials, sites of village centers, village markets and the spaces of congregation for people who gather in the evenings to have a cup of chai. During my fieldwork, participant observation was carried out primarily in three different villages inside BTK between the months of February, July, August and September of 2024 (these are also the same months I conducted interviews, see below). However, my observations took me beyond and between these villages and BTK.



Figure 4 (Author, 2024) Construction residue towering over ADG village wall.



Figure 5 (Author, 2024) BTK security questioning village residents.



Figure 6 (Author, 2024) Smaller BTK gate.

I left BTK multiple times through the many smaller gates so that I could get a sense of what is beyond them. In that, I made observations about what lays beyond the confines of BTK and how BTK's construction has affected the lay of the land of farms immediately outside BTK. I also ventured inside these sites to speak to the village residents there to gain insights about how they see the villages inside BTK. My observations particularly paid attention to the sites of walling within and beyond BTK, to see how markings, logos, calligraphy and other signs signal racialization of the residents of the area. This revealed much about the ethnic and racial dimensions of BTK's occupation and responses and resistance against it. Other observations included sites of holes in the boundary wall of BTK, sites of incomplete boundaries, broken gates, barbed wire stretches and unpaved road networks to gain insight into the irregularities and porosities of the enclave. The ultimate purpose of these observations was to find out the ways in which life is structured and upended in a space rife with dispossession politics. These observations contributed to the larger analytical effort for this thesis (See section on analysis below).

Interviews

Interviews were my main source of information alongside observations and casual conversations. I constructed an interview guide that emerged from my questions and literature review that I sometimes deviated from to accommodate the participant at any given instance (See interview guide in Annex). I conducted a total of 12 semi-structured interviews. Most of these interviews were with groups of people often speaking at the same time in Sindhi and Balochi. While I do not speak Balochi, parts of the language are intelligible to me and for other parts I sought help from the person sitting next to me at any given moment. These interviews were held with community

members in their spaces of living, so inside their respective village. As such, I would not categorize them as focus group discussions because it would often be that people were coming and going within the span of any given interview. It means, that as I spoke to one person, another listened, and they sometimes answered in each other's behest or sometimes spoke over each other, and some other times, ignored questions altogether to make a different point of their own. Interviews were also organized in a manner where not everyone introduced themselves, but rather sporadically joined the conversation.

My respondents were between the ages of 20-65. Most of these respondents were male, with the exception of some elderly women who joined the conversation in HAMG. In HAMG and ADG, I was able to interview village elders and residents alike. In DGG, however, I was unable to speak with the elders and thus only spoke with some residents from within the village. Most village residents were either unemployed, or had some precarious occupation such as a street vendor, tanker driver or goat herder. In total, I spoke with eight residents of HAMG, seven people from AGD and four from DGG. Combined, they took the shape of 12 recordings in Sindhi and Balochi languages, the transliterated transcripts of which can be made available upon request. Moreover, across the time spent inside each village, I was also conducting reflexive interviews outside of BTK, inside villages that are located immediately along the walls. They wished to remain anonymous and so I do not make much use of their quotes and locations. I have only used the conversations with them for contextual purposes and integrated them with observations to better produce an ethnographic sense for this thesis.

My interviews firstly concerned their knowledge of the village they lived in. This included the age of the village, the size of farms, and other details pertaining to a history of the area. Then the interviews proceeded towards asking about the memory of BTK's arrival, the arrival of walls, the slow disappearance of their farms, and the changes they have seen over the last fifteen years. I then proceeded to ask about their present conditions, how they navigate walls, what they do for a living, how they sustain themselves and how they see themselves as residents inside BTK. My final questions asked about how they view the future, the future of BTK, their villages, the children of the area and their evolving relationship to BTK. Often the interviews wavered in directions otherwise, and I learnt of many stories of violence, occupation and grounded instances through which BTK inserted itself in Malir. Most of these conversations and questions served to provide a detailed account of the lived realities of villagers and in many cases also revealed the sentiments of villagers about BTK and their condition. These sentimentalities then directed me to pose questions on resistance and responses which revealed politically motivated efforts directed by villagers against BTK. Interviews therefore, became one of the main ways in which the structure of this thesis emerged.

Archives

Because of my previous engagements and my background as a student of history, I made use of some archival sources for this investigation. Some archival research was done at the Sindh Archives and at Fateh Point Archives, both located in Karachi. The archival sources I used were the Sindh Official Gazettes of 1900. The Gazettes were large catalogues that the colonial administration made to document the on goings of colonial occupation and conquest. These gazettes also became a way in which the colonial administration organized itself, and therefore,

the populations they colonized. In the case of South Asia, various forms of gazettes were published on a monthly, bi-monthly and yearly basis. At the millennium mark, the gazette provided an extensive summary of the previous years. The gazettes hold detailed information on census data, land use, climate, vegetation, cities, demographics, species, genocides, religions, languages, projects, budgets and much more. It is an extensive insight into colonial administrative workings and therefore was helpful in understanding how colonialism shaped racial differences between the natives and the whites, and then among the natives themselves, as I show in the literature review and in chapter 4, through the institution of martial races.

Mapping and Photography

Mapping is central to any research on territorial space. The space of Malir occupied by BTK was in many ways justified through the use of mapping and through the alteration of existing maps. Moreover, the resistance against BTK also uses maps to counteract occupation. This makes the use of cartographic methods central. Although maps are scattered throughout this thesis, I only use them as reference points and visual aids to better understand layouts for the reader. The use of maps in counterinsurgency would demand an entirely different thesis altogether. Nonetheless, some of the maps I use in this thesis were provided to me by Akhter Baloch, who is mentioned elsewhere in the thesis. In other places, I produced the maps myself through the use of Google MyMaps, ScribbleMaps and ArchGIS. I have used maps to show the before and after condition of Malir, especially focused on villages inside BTK. I also made maps to highlight the differences between village geographies and BTK's ordered planning. I use them to highlight spatial differences that are immediately at odds with one another. All of the maps are labelled as figures and are referenced in the text where I analyze them or cite them.

Across my fieldwork I was also always taking pictures. Sometimes instances and interactions that I saw as a passerby, could not be accessed through direct communication or interaction with the subjects, and so photography helped capture some of those instances that became useful for my analysis. These instances include for example, passing by a truck that is carrying construction workers, a police van stopping a group of men from entering the BTK gates, graffiti on walls, images of wall openings, images of security infrastructure of the gates since I could not access gate guards and BTK officials. Photography in this way became a visual aid in my investigation that gave weight to the overall argumentation. In many instances, I was encouraged by my participants to take pictures of certain locations and sites and to insert them in my thesis, which I have done so across the document.

Analytical strategy

My reason to study dispossession, racialization and resistance is rooted in my own experiences of living in Karachi. The city is rife with struggles of dispossession as informal settlements, villages and squats come under eviction notices regularly, and as entire communities are displaced in response to incoming development. The complexity of the city's socio-spatial struggles is very much rooted also in its colonial and postcolonial histories where the dynamics and parameters of marginalization along ethno-racial lines were arranged in a way that they continue effecting their influence even today. At the same time, Karachi is also a hotspot for social movements which confer it a resistant quality. Many, in fact, have criticized the use of the word 'resilient' in this

regard, that why should the city and its residents be ‘resilient’ in the face of larger socio-historical and structural processes. Broadly then, I was interested in the very complex interplay of these dynamics as they shape one particular region of the city, namely, Malir. Malir has become the emergent frontier where many of these struggles are at play and in ways that are often difficult to detangle. My initial inquiries on Malir were exploratory, propelled by the desire to sharpen my research questions. However, as my fieldwork progressed, my theoretical focus began taking shape, informed by the observations and conversations I started having with residents of Malir. My analysis is thus, similarly informed by these observations and conversations.

Across my field work, I accumulated a wealth of ethnographic data, including, fieldnotes, maps, archival material, photographs and interview recordings. I transcribed the interviews manually since AI transcription tools did not adequately pick up the Sindhi and Balochi languages, especially in the dialect spoken by farmers in Malir. After transcription, I reviewed them and translated them to the best of my abilities. I did not make use of any software for analysis. All of the translations, fieldnotes and observations were organized through extensive literature reviews and through conversations held with community members inside Malir. The only instance where a software was used was to make a map. Through an examination of the literature and conceptual frameworks, I developed a series of instances that directed my analysis. I therefore, use various perspectives to zoom into the development of BTK in Malir, and the itinerant processes shaping life for villages inside. Through conversations with journalists, academics, artists activists and community members I bring in their experiences and perspectives as codes of analysis. For instance, in the first section of chapter 5 I bring in three different layers to tell the story of the development of BTK. These were informed by three different dimensions of conversations. First with Nazeeha Syed, then with Shahana and Zahra, and finally through the voices of the village residents themselves responding to the three layers of analysis, the bureaucratic, the war-on-terror-racial and the grounded. Thereafter, I primarily use the voices of the village residents to examine modes of securitization and regulation to respond to my three theoretical underpinnings: ABD, Racial Capitalism and Resistance. The analytical strategy for this thesis therefore, is ultimately rooted in the use of these three theoretical strands that undergird the layered arguments that shape the complex story of BTK and the walled villages inside.

V. Positionality and Ethics

As a graduate student in Urban Studies, entering the field with the intentions of a final product in the form of a thesis can be a violent and extractive process. Although I am a Sindhi working class student and I speak the language, there still are markers of social and cultural capital that create an unevenness in my experience of being from Sindh and of those living under conditions of occupation. My position as a researcher was questioned many times. I was asked what the product of these questions would amount to, and why I was interested in their plight. However, the more I spoke with village residents, the more eager they became to tell their story. In the very beginning, for my first independent interview without the company of Hafeez, I took some friends who worked as researchers and journalists in the city at the time. In Karachi, journalism is one of the only discourses that people familiarly engage with. Therefore, with the help of my friend Wara Irfan Khan, who was a journalist at DAWN at the time, I was able to speak through the language of familiarity for the village residents. Engaging other researchers and activists from the city with my field site became my way of thinking through and methodologizing this study. Although

research carries with itself inherent violences and many scholars have written about the extractive and exploitative qualities of academic research, it may serve to say that such research is still needed to document contemporary processes, even if just for affective or reference purposes. When I told some of the residents that I want to write about them, they became very excited and wanted to see their words on paper. And I know it doesn't do much in terms of effecting change at a material level, but that is also something of my own limitation set around power.

Working mostly with residents of walled villages, I was acutely aware of the sensitivity and ethical dimensions of the conversations I would have. As I have mentioned before, the very methods and impulses of this work were directed by the participants, and so, the ethical dimensions were also dictated by them. Common to social science research, the ethical practice of written formalized consent was not granted here, as most of the residents I spoke to, had preferred verbal and audio recorded consent. Because all of my interviews were in the Sindhi language, the ethical dimensions were also shaped around that. Most of my participants urged me to record the interview and say their name in my thesis. As this thesis also reflects on questions of resistance, the intentions to be recorded and their names be said out loud, became a provocation into recording resistance. In each of my interview, I began with explaining my research, its intentions and invited questions. Most of my participants asked for their names to be mentioned, but some gave ambiguous responses. Hence in order for some names to remain anonymous, I have shuffled names of people, villages, and identifiers of specific locations so that a sense of anonymity can remain present while also fulfilling the promise of receipt of the mention of their names.

VI. Limitations

Working with vulnerable populations comes with many sets of limitations, and in the case of a postcolonial setting, often compounded in many ways. Working with formerly farming communities, under occupation comes firstly with a set of affective limitations. And working in South Asia, as a male-presenting code-switching body, studying gendered relations becomes another limitation. And finally, attempting to give an overview of the dynamics of such a vast region like Malir, and then a multi-billion-dollar mega development project of BTK, comes with the loss of much information that the limited pages of this thesis simply cannot cover. My methodological limitations also include the limitations of time of engagement and limitations of approach. This means that had I spent more time, perhaps I could have gathered a larger sample size for better review of the conditions of village residents, and a different approach would have perhaps materialized in a different analysis of the investigation.

Emotional Impacts

Land, as is described elsewhere in this thesis, constitutes an affective relationship built between the communities who live on it and their social, cultural and everyday livelihood practices. The process of dispossession, therefore was a violent and deeply traumatizing process. In order for the participants to only reveal as much as they wanted to, I asked each question with a caution and attempted to not go deeper into the effects of violence. This meant not asking questions about death, unless they explicitly mention it; staying away from asking to see sites of home demolitions; and not engaging too deeply with the state of harassment faced at the gates, unless they opened those stories up themselves.

Gendering Things

Any study in a setting rife with extreme gendered differences demands a ‘gendered interrogation’. And this ‘gendering’ is often concealed to mean the impacts and relations of ‘women’ and ‘trans-queer’ people. These conversations are difficult because although gender means different things, even among the different villages, and it really is a process of negotiation and relation-making. However, in my attempt to take my friend Wara’s help, I asked her if she can help me speak with some women. During trips with Wara, her presence alone made some women comfortable speaking to us. However, often times, these were elder women who sat with us along with their families. There was hardly a conversation that I had in an isolated one-on-one setting, minus some exceptions. Nonetheless, the interviews and conversations I had, I did not find sufficient enough to make a gendered analysis as it seemed to me that a limited engagement would only do an utter injustice to the real impacts. Therefore, I made sure to also ask questions that are mostly directed about children, families and the general state of affairs of their lives.

Everything Else

BTK is a vast entity presently shaping many other facets of life. Many more villages are under occupation and walled. Much more dispossession is presently happening as they hollow out the Khirthar mountains for their sand mining projects. Part of my limitation is also, due to the nature of limited scopes of research, funding and time, of an inability to engage deeply with other facets of BTK’s occupation. The grand mosque for example is built on occupied land, and any claims for that land are met with blasphemy charges. Therefore, the socio-historical and political implications of state laws and the manipulation of religious narratives are a prominent domain through which BTK materialized itself. The climatic impact is another domain of concern as the erasure of farmland, grazing pastures and rivers induced a significant climatic stress in an already climatically vulnerable setting. Moreover, the multispecies impact of the construction of BTK on wildlife is also a probable site of study. Outside of these concerns, a deeper engagement with the relations between villages and those outside of the walls of BTK is also needed to provide for a larger, more holistic analysis of BTK’s predatory practices in severing ties between communities. These are some of the many possible sites, topics and themes of study that this present thesis was unable to engage with.

4. Karachi Dispossessed

Karachi’s story of urban expansion is inseparable from its history of dispossession. Over decades, state-led projects have transformed the city’s geography, displacing thousands under the banners of infrastructure and modernization. From the clearance of working-class settlements for the Lyari Expressway to more recent evictions tied to large-scale real estate developments, the city has repeatedly demonstrated how state and corporate actors collude to convert lived space into monetized property. Research by Nausheen Anwer (2018), Arif Hasan (2014), and others has documented the enduring human cost of these projects, showing how “development” often conceals violent erasures of livelihoods, histories, and communities. This wider context is crucial for understanding how Malir’s rural periphery, that was once considered peripheral to Karachi’s growth, has become central to the city’s new urban frontier of land acquisition and elite speculation.

These processes are not new but deeply embedded in colonial and postcolonial land regimes. The British annexation of Sindh in 1843 instituted policies that redefined land as an object of bureaucratic control and economic extraction. Systems of revenue collection, titling, and state ownership were entrenched through laws like the 1894 Land Acquisition Act. They established the legal and administrative basis for seizing land under claims of “public purpose.” Post-2001 liberalization policies, including the Sindh Local Government Ordinance (SLO 2001), reactivated and retooled these colonial instruments to facilitate privatization and speculative development. Together, these shifts have enabled the large-scale transfer of agrarian and common lands into private, corporate, and military hands, laying the groundwork for the transformation of Malir into a contested urban zone.

Karachi is also a city of political resistance, where struggles over land intersect with broader movements against state violence. Housing rights activism, from groups like the Karachi Bachao Tehreek, has challenged mass evictions in informal settlements, while the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYQ) has brought national attention to military abuses against Baloch communities. In Malir, these currents converge: indigenous Sindhi and Baloch villagers contest dispossession not only as an economic loss but as an assault on political identity and cultural survival. This makes the fight over land in Malir more than a dispute over property- it is part of a longer struggle against state projects that reproduce colonial hierarchies, militarized governance, and racialized exclusion. This chapter builds context for these dynamics through an exploration of Karachi’s history of dispossession and racialization that has resulted in various articulations for land struggles to build on a genealogy of postcolonial governance of the city.

I. Land, Colonialism & Dispossession in Malir

As Karachi’s largest district, Malir has historically comprised the city’s rural and agricultural landscape, hosting over 2000 *goths* (villages) of predominantly Sindhi and Baloch ethnic populations whose livelihoods depend on an agro-livestock economy (Farhan 2013). Their social and political relations are based on tightly knit kinship networks which characterize the nomadic-tribal lineages of these communities, remnants of which continue through the use of their last names, Baloch-Gabol and Deepar-Goondar for instance, that sustain kinship relations (Interview with ADG village residents, 2024). While their social and political ways of relating to land and each other predate the textual archive, the associated subsistence economy has been constructed through an interplay of pre-colonial and colonial histories, whose continuities linger in the present (Gazdar 2011; Imran 2014).

As rulers of Sindh in the pre-colonial era, Talpurs were the dominant owners of land in the province. Among the many forms of land ownership, one way in which the Talpurs arranged land for cultivation was through annual leasing agreements that were used to access land between the Talpurs and tribal farming communities. Farming communities had communal access and land was distributed more freely as colonial documentation had not yet made solidified arrangements for land access. In 1843, Sindh was annexed by the British and a new land policy emerged under British colonialism. Within this colonial policy, land was to be collectively tilled and the deed was held by the *wadera* (Village elder/head). To legally bind land to the colonial government the Board of Revenue (BoR) was set up as a colonial administrative institution that assumed ownership of all land under British administration and whose bureaucratic processes leased land back to

communities at minimal rates, the wadera here became an intermediary between the colonial administration and the farmer (Syed 2016). Such efforts were replicated across British India in the early colonial period to garner loyalty to the British government. Other land policies like the Land acquisition act of 1894 and the Sindh land colonization act of 1912 were later added to tighten regulations for uncultivated land. In the 19th and early 20th century, as pastoral communities grew, they built smaller villages adjoining any given ancestral village, which meant that uncultivated and pastoral land came under use for tilling against the regulations of the government (Akhter & Rashid 2021). This was a natural response for growing families in villages and went marginally ignored by the British, although new deeds were prepared in some cases and taxes were still being collected. Upon the partition of India in 1947, many colonial institutions like the BoR retained their authority through local bureaucracy, and continue to do so today (Jalal 2008). Hence, today, many pastures of land and villages legally come under state-ownership through an appropriation of colonial laws which produce multiple axes of contestations for those communities who have historically tilled pastoral land for which papers were not provided by the colonial administration, giving way to state-led displacement of these communities on grounds of encroachment of state held land.

While Sindhi and Baloch communities were granted land for crop cultivation, and the practice continued until the beginning of the 21st century, the last two decades have seen a rampant erasure of the settlements and local tilling practices. Until the turn of the century, these farmlands supplied fresh vegetables and fruits to Karachi and held an important role in its climatic regulations. Today, however, they have become a fast-disappearing phenomenon to make way for luxury apartments, gated housing schemes and superhighways (Syed 2014; Anwar 2018).

Two of the largest projects, Malik Riaz's *Bahria Town Karachi* (BTK) and the military's *DHA City* are located about 55 km north-east of the city center, covering over 93 km² and 55km² respectively (Anwar 2018; Syed 2021). With their construction nearly complete in the past 15 years, both are purported to be a solution to Karachi's rapid population growth and security problems. Outside of these two projects, there are many small-scale housing projects, some self-initiated by what were formerly farming villages, and some as extensions of the two major developments such as BTK 2. Most developmental schemes such as BTK occupy land by putting up walls as a first indicator to secure their parameters, a practice reminiscent of early colonial exploits in India where 'camps and barracks' were constructed as first indicators of the arrival of colonial administration. In Karachi, Malir and Manora Island, being the northernmost district and the southernmost island respectively, were the sites for the first colonial camps and barracks built to annex the city. The building of walls, barracks, camps and displacing of populations for colonial urban development, and later postcolonial urban development are also intrinsic features representing a genealogy of displacement practices in a surge to accumulate land (King 2015).

Karachi is host to many projects such as BTK along its coastal front and in its center as representative not only of the city's drive for world-class status, but also as Pakistan's neoliberal advancements (Dawn, 2014; Anwar, 2018). These developments are largely also embedded in the country's emergent dynamics of decentralization and economic liberalization policies since 2001. The question of Malir was taken up at the same time with the introduction of the Sindh Land Governance Ordinance Act 2001 (SLGO) which brought within the folds of the city, the peripheral rural region as a way to expand city-region urbanization. This act was a follow up to the *New*

Economic Policy (NEP) implemented in 1991 as a series of liberalization reforms aimed at deregulation, privatization and globalization to boost private sector economic growth. These policy transformations are fraught with socio-spatial conflicts concerning claims around legal/illegal land acquisitions, record tampering, rampant corruption and the violent erasure of embedded livelihoods. The walls around villages inside BTK, and the occupation of land by BTK as a financialized economic effort to ‘develop’ previously ‘unproductive’ land, emerge from and represent these conflicts, and their regulation becomes representative of larger socio-spatial and economic arrangements that further a neoliberal nation building project rooted in class, gender and ethnic divide along spatial, social and economic scales.



Figure 7 (Author, 2024) Billboard advert for new gated housing schemes around BTK.

To jump back into the colonial moment, all uncultivated land was owned by the colonial administration, especially that where agricultural practice happened but for which revenue was not settled. This was land adjacent to populated villages. However, it was of course always in use and was considered as common property at the village and communal levels. The negligence of the colonial government in reinstating this land to the farmer was carried forward by the political regimes in the postcolonial era. Therefore, the uneven, unregulated and ambiguous relationship to land predates BTK’s construction, and yet ties BTK to a colonial genealogy, as BTK and the Malir Development Authority (MDA) with the BoR, used these uncertainties in the form of buying out ‘uncultivated’ land that lay between villages to consolidate land for the gated housing project. The ways in which land was essentially taken over, was by piecing together all land that ‘legally’ could be taken up, although with aggressive use of military and police force, that lay between villages and ‘developing’ that land meant isolating the villages from one another through construction processes. These practices of building between villages to cut access to kinship and socio-political networks have historically been seen through the use of the colonial ‘divide and rule’ policy where divisions between groups were manufactured so that rule could be enacted by diminishing organized resistance. Developers like BTK and military-state backed incentives to corporate actors replicate much the same processes today. In this way, the postcolonial bureaucratic and military

institutions have always been a product of colonial rule, as argued by scholars like Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose (2004). Problems surrounding property and land also made way into land resettlement issues between Sindhis and Muhajjirs (migrant-refugees from India) in the decades following partition along with long standing land rights issues that remain in Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan, Balochistan and along the heavily militarized and yet loosely administered Durand line separating Pakistan and Afghanistan. Land and property effectively thus became the space within which ethnic conflict emerged to destabilize integrated political relationships with urban and rural communities. These conflicts exacerbated ethnic divides and deployed them over land relationships, contributing to a segregated spatial arrangement within many cities of Pakistan. This meant that majority Muhajir, Sindhi, Baloch and Punjabi neighborhoods were often segregated along lines of ethnicity, religion, language and caste with the later introduction of Dalit Christians, Bengali refugees, Rohingya and Afghan migrants forming their own settlements in the city, many of which functioned around the practice of walling, gating and squatting.

The military played a pivotal role in shaping conflicts over land ownership and the production of enclaves as they settled vast tracts of urban land under their ownership. The Defence Housing Authority (DHA) in Karachi is one example of military real estate, which originated in the 1950s and extended its enterprise into most major cities of Pakistan (Nasir 2014). The Malir Cantt, another vast enclave also emerged in 1948, a year after the partition of India, as a walled enclosure for military residence in Karachi. In recent years, projects like DHA city and investments in retail, energy and industry has made the military a major economic driver that prompts securitization and has heightened surveillance around economic, social and virtual activity along with being one of the biggest landowners of the city, and from some estimates, owning over 12% of all land in Pakistan through various enterprises (Siddiqi 2016). This has led to a spillover of territorial and population control through militaristic practices of walling, surveilling, gating, guarding and regimenting movement in most socio-spatial arrangements in Pakistan, especially in urban areas and their rural-urban peripheral counterparts (Kaker 2013). From schools, hospitals, markets to banks, politics, courts, telecommunications and the bureaucracy, the military has stakes in nearly everything, resulting in an atmosphere of intensifying spatial control. Walling, as one form of spatial control, could then be understood not just in its material functioning of separating space, but also in the way it produces a dispossessed subject. Under the larger social formation of an imaginary of the nation within which walled-in and out subjects operate, military rule thereby informs the ways in which contemporary urbanization shapes the city.

Reflecting on questions of accumulation of capital by dispossession, scholars like Nausheen Anwer (2018) and Shubhra Gururani (2019) have argued that the agrarian-urban question, is a question of intensifying “value struggles” and simultaneously, also that of a governmental bio-territorial process by which categories of territory and population are continually constructed and articulated with one another (Anwar, 2018; Gururani, 2019). While the political-economic desirability of land as asset has allowed for intensifying domestic and international capital to build high-end development, vulnerable groups like farmers and pastoralists rarely benefit from such endeavours. It is in this struggle that gated enclaves become a physical manifestation of Harvey’s ‘spatial fix’ where the state enables ‘zones of exception,’ such as BTK, by incentivizing corporate investors and for the military by altering laws, suspending land use or using brute force to accumulate land through dispossession (Harvey 2004; Roy 2005). These practices signal a

complex set of processes at play, directed at capitalist regeneration through the marginalization of certain groups by way of fixing these struggles in space, on land.

Partly through his long-standing partnership with the Pakistan navy, Malik Riaz has been able to expand his real estate empire in Malir also by involving military and the state as financial and security stakeholders in BTK (Akhter and Rashid 2021). A key aspect of its success in acquiring land is through the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 that does not provide compensation for those who till the land without having legal title, nor does it recognize communal rights over land. Moreover, the act permits the state to acquire land for “public purposes,” an ambiguous term that has enabled the Malir Development Authority (MDA) and BoR to collude with the military to buy land for profit by displacing and walling populations (Dawn 2024). The legal ambiguity provides this case the undergirding framework to operate as it does today.

Between 2014 and 2020, the villages that came in the way of BTK were put under the throes of police violence, military intimidation and state abandonment. Some activist organizations like Karachi Indigenous Rights Alliance (KIRA) which was later named the Sindh Indigenous Rights Alliance (SIRA) were able to take the developer to court with the help of a humanitarian legal counsel. By the time the courts could give a ruling, much of the infrastructure around BTK was already underway, plots were sold, high-rise apartments complexes built and the largest mosque of Pakistan sanctified, which in the national religious imaginary, became a hallmark for neoliberal and religious development. In this, the few villages that remained within the confines of BTK were ordered to be walled out with the intention that their remaining land would be constitutionally protected. Within the state’s ambiguous laws and through a consolidation of uncultivated land BTK was able to acquire most farms and pasturing land, leaving behind isolated enclaves of farming communities whose means of subsistence have all but erased within the span of a decade. Today, a double walling effect confines the village communities inside BTK, doubly under the developer and state’s surveillance, doubly behind BTK’s walls and the walls of the village. This study presents thus, the interlaced case of three walled villages, covering an area of less than 1 km² each, that find themselves inside the 93km² walled expanse of BTK that detail the story of the many forms of dispossession, colonial violence and racial capitalism and the response to these violences by village residents whose lives and livelihoods have been forever altered.

II. Racializing Populations

Pakistan’s political and social organization has been deeply shaped by its colonial inheritance, which classified, ranked, and governed populations through ethnolinguistic and religious distinctions. As stated above, these practices did not dissolve with decolonization; rather, they were repurposed by the postcolonial state, especially the military, to manage and control the polity. As Tantray (2024) explains, the British colonial regime employed Orientalist tropes to divide the population into martial and non-martial races, thereby justifying selective recruitment and violence. This racialized discourse was subsequently inherited by the Pakistani state, which deployed similar strategies to marginalize dissenting or peripheral communities such as the Baloch and Bengalis, often branding them as either effeminate, disloyal, or backward. The 1971 war and the brutal repression in East Pakistan illustrated how such colonial logics could be weaponized for internal domination. These acts were not merely about ethnicity or security, rather they were structured through racial logics that dehumanized entire populations as less deserving of

autonomy, dignity, or inclusion in the national imagination (Tantray, 2024). Similarly, in Balochistan, there has been a consistent separation between the Baloch, Pashtun and Hazara communities that has been regulated and manufactured by the military. The military's presence in the province, and the ongoing genocide of the Baloch people is testament to its continued assertion.

This postcolonial racialization operates in tandem with the militarized structure of the Pakistani state. Kirmani (2015) demonstrates how young Baloch men in Karachi navigate everyday fears of criminal and state violence that are shaped by their ethnic identity and geographic marginality. In spaces like Lyari, these populations are not only policed through brute force but also symbolically excluded from the urban fabric, frequently depicted as threats to order and security. This racialized exclusion becomes productive for the state: it justifies militarized governance while masking the political economy of urban control. Saqib Amin (2019) argues that ethnic diversity in Pakistan is often framed as a problem, leading to weak institutions and social exclusion. Yet this exclusion is not accidental, it serves the interests of a political-military elite that thrives on governance through fragmentation. The military, in particular, has leveraged ethnic divisions to assert its legitimacy and extract rents, political, economic, and spatial, especially in urban mega-projects that displace indigenous communities under the guise of development. Therefore, spaces like BTK and villages inside become markers of racial separations.

Viewed through the lens of racial capitalism, these dynamics reveal a broader pattern. The systematic racialization of certain populations enables their dispossession, while simultaneously opening up new opportunities for capital accumulation. The military's involvement in land development projects like BTK illustrates this nexus clearly. Ethnically marked populations are either displaced or enclosed, while state-corporate actors monetize the very spaces they helped empty. As Shah (2016) shows, state development often reinscribes ethnic and class hierarchies through urban planning, where elite enclaves emerge as sanitized, securitized zones, and racialized others are rendered invisible or criminal. Racialization thus becomes both a mechanism of control and an economic logic, it explains who gets displaced, who gets surveilled, and who profits. Far from being incidental, the colonial inheritance of ethnic sorting, sustained by a militarized postcolonial order, has become essential to the workings of Pakistan's urban political economy.

This chapter has outlined how infrastructural logics, legal regimes, and a history of militarized planning have come together to produce a spatialized architecture of dispossession in the name of development. Yet, these macrostructures are not abstract. They are enacted on the ground through forced land conversions, silent enclosures, and the gradual suffocation of communities. In Malir, the transformation of farmland and ancestral villages into gated housing, golf courses, and commercial zones was not an accidental byproduct of planning, but the direct outcome of a systematic project of territorial acquisition and erasure. Simultaneously, this form of dispossession is also deeply rooted in ethnic and racial divides. Scholars studying Pakistan's social exclusion and marginalization often turn to ethnicity and colonialism but rarely make the connection between the ways in which ethnic divides are operationalized under racial logics and their importance in the political economy of the state. This thesis, in elaborating on some of the ways in which BTK accumulated land, attempts to also draw out this connection in the following chapter. What follows is a closer examination of that transformation, as seen from within. Chapter 5 turns to the lived realities of three villages that now find themselves walled inside BTK's boundaries, enclosed, displaced-in-place, and yet still enduring.

5. Walled Villages of Bahria Town

The transformation of Malir's agrarian landscapes into urban spectacle is most viscerally observed in BTK, where vast walls and security infrastructure isolate pockets of farming villages within a master-planned enclave of elite housing, commercial development, and capitalized urbanism. This chapter provides an ethnographic entry into the encirclement of these villages, the logics and tactics behind this enclosure, and the everyday negotiations of life inside a space that is physically within BTK, but materially and politically cast outside of it. These villages, while geographically surrounded by BTK's infrastructure, exist in a kind of spatial contradiction that are at once included and excluded, governed yet abandoned, incorporated into a real estate project but cut off from its resources, services, and promises of security.

To understand this paradoxical enclosure, I return to the story of HAMG and other villages now walled within BTK's perimeter. The walls here are not incidental, they are active technologies of separation that symbolize broader processes of dispossession, legal ambiguity, and racialized exclusion. Simultaneously, they are also features of resistance, protection and survival. These are not metaphorical barriers, but thick, often militarized, infrastructures that mark the limits of land that is valuable and land that is left over (land that is inaccessible for development). As will be discussed throughout this chapter, these walls do more than keep people out, they also keep people in. And in doing so, they create zones of exception, where juridical ambiguity responds to and converses with sovereign violence.

This chapter is organized through three interconnected sub-chapters, each corresponding to the broader interlinked theoretical frame, accumulation by dispossession, racial capitalism, and resistance, which together allow for a grounded analysis of how capitalist urban expansion materializes as everyday violence. Drawing from fieldwork, interviews, mapping, and secondary sources, the chapter details how three village communities have been subject to a layered process of displacement and reordering that stretches beyond eviction, since they were not all removed; some were enclosed, surveilled, and left to adapt to a drastically restructured world around them.

In the first sub-chapter, "Bahria Came and We Lost Everything," I explore the early encounters of villagers with BTK's encroachment which marked a moment of confusion, opportunism, and panic. Land deals were made, often through coercive or misleading arrangements, and these communities experienced a shift in livelihood and a transformation in how they accessed life. The chapter situates this within the broader historical and legal mechanisms of colonial property regimes and post-colonial developmentalism that enabled BTK to acquire land.

The second sub-chapter, "Securitization and Mobilities" attends to the walls themselves, their physicality and symbolism. Here, I explore how ethnicized securitization has reorganized space around the villages and produced new forms of inequality. Baloch and Sindhi villagers, who were once stewards of the land, now find themselves spatially confined, monitored, and subject to racialized suspicion. The chapter details how their mobility is curtailed to maintain BTK's vast infrastructure.

Finally, the third sub-chapter, "Acts of Resistance," shifts from subjection to agency. Contrary to the image of passive victims, many villagers have enacted daily and collective forms of resistance that range from court petitions and public protests, to small acts of sabotage. Through these acts,

the villagers transform the walls that enclose them into sites of contestation, not merely confinement.

Taken together, these chapters argue that enclosure in BTK is not merely spatial, but epistemic, legal, affective, and racial. By treating these villages as sites, rather than remnants, the chapter asks: what does it mean to be enclosed within the “promise of a new city”? What new urban subjectivities and exclusions are produced in the shadow of elite real estate? How do communities resist, endure, and narrate their enclosure?

I. “Bahria Came and We Lost Everything”

In order to understand how the villagers were dispossessed of their land and how BTK built itself around the villages, encircling them from all sides, we need to first look at the ways in which this encircling happened. I trace the arrival of Bahria Town through three different perspectives. The first is the instance when Naziha Syed uncovered the illegal land grabbing by BTK in 2016. She is one of the only journalists who has been able to cover and investigate in painstaking detail, the legal and bureaucratic processes through which land was accumulated for the construction of BTK. Second, I use research done by artists Shahana Rajani and Zahra Malkani (2019), along with my conversations with them, to show how the militarization of Karachi through federally approved ‘clean up’ operations paved the way for BTK’s land grabbing efforts as a way to make sense of how the military actively used violence against marginalized ethnicities to accumulate massive tracts of land. Finally, I trace conversations with residents of the villages that encountered the coming of BTK through various instances of violence and coercion until the point of their walling.

Ia. The Bureaucratic Story

BTK as an enterprise took over land in Malir through various modes channeling power, coercion and tactics of manipulating the law. Naziha Syed, an investigative journalist, has written multiple reports on the ways in which BTK systematically manipulated and violated existing laws, used military and police violence to coerce villagers out of their homes, and colluded with corrupt political elite to displace farmers and villagers of their ancestral land to pursue construction in Malir under the guise of development to make a ‘colossal fortune’ off of government and agrarian land (DAWN, 2016). In my brief interview with her she laid out an impactful summary of the scale and violence associated with BTK’s construction:

“BTK had not yet entered the public imaginary in the ways it shows itself today. Until 2016, when I first heard about BTK, it was mostly investors and real estate agencies advertising a new housing scheme. My colleague and I were investigating the murder of Parveen Rahman when we heard chatter about this new housing scheme that is racking up massive amounts of profit on land speculation. Mere registration forms for plots going up for well over PKR 100,000 and the plots themselves going for tens, if not hundreds of millions at the time. Parveen Rahman’s murder was inevitably tied to land grabs in the city as she was working on registering undocumented villages in Karachi under the Goth Abad Scheme which threatened the powers-that-be (military) because evicting villages after they have been regularised is a costly affair. She helped well over 500 of the

800+ villages in Malir, so you can imagine the growing concern of the corrupt state.” (Interview with Naziha Syed, by Author, 2024)

Several scholars have recognized the role of the state in brokering land for real estate and corporate interests, where the state’s role is salient in the advancement of unequal capitalist regeneration and simultaneously in enabling the violence of dispossession suffered by small landholders like farmers, peasant classes and the urban poor (Khalil 2019; Bayyat 2010; Yiftachel 2020; Roy 2019; Harvey 2004). In her first report on BTK (Dawn, 2016), Naziha Syed details the events between 2012 and 2016, that entail a series of collaborations between BTK as a corporate enterprise, the BoR, MDA, the Sindh Building Control Authorities (SBCA), local government, military and real estate agencies for the largest takeover of land in Pakistan’s largest city in recent history. In a country where the question of land has historically been a volatile subject, the takeover of land at this scale required much effort and manipulation. This manipulation did not only play out within current legal frameworks, but took up colonial and postcolonial constitutions, events and arrangements, to systematically accumulate land and dispossess people. Events like the partition of India and subsequent conflicts have always played out on issues of who gets land where and this political and spatial volatility was used against the farmers of Malir to occupy their land. A facade of legal proceedings was made up to disguise the illegal efforts of state and non-state collusions.

The BoR is the primary custodian of all land, especially in the case of allotment of land for any given purpose in the country, but provincial and local governments are able to assert their own power in local contexts. In 2012, concerning the Karachi unrest case, the federal government issued a ban on the lease of any land in the province of Sindh. However, the BoR Sindh in collaboration with local courts, amended the MDA act of 1993 to allow the MDA to gain more flexibility. Previously, the MDA only had limited authority to regulate building codes and permissions for construction. However, this amendment allowed the MDA to survey and lease land out for ‘development’ which was a power previously reserved for the BoR. Constitutionally, the MDA, much like any district or city development authority like the KDA (Karachi Development Authority) or LDA (Lahore Development Authority) always needs to comply with certain building regulations along with specific regulations where private real estate developers are involved. However, given the officials who headed the MDA at the time, along with retired military personnel who were given seats as directors in the BTK and MDA boards, land consolidation and construction ensued through an ambiguous interpretation of the law and through illegal practice. Between 2012 and 2016, therefore, while on the one side a legally ambiguous bureaucratic trail was being set up to confuse the courts and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to justify land consolidation, on the other side there was intensified violence throttled on the villages that came in the way of the mammoth housing scheme. State officials like the Malir commissioner, police superintendents and military colonels all charged on the villages to occupy thousands of acres of land by force. Meanwhile, in the southernmost elite neighborhood of DHA, real estate agencies were selling registration forms for the newly available land in a highly speculative market. This meant that processes of acquiring land illegally, and selling and marketing of the false registration of land in what is now BTK were simultaneous processes, which is how the enterprise garnered much of its initial capital that was channeled back into the enclave to push for further occupation of land by buying out state officials and constructing infrastructures of

occupation. The political and corporate elite therefore, used existing structures to put in motion what Naziha calls a ‘saga’ that has played out over the last decade.

Such accumulation of land directly responds to Harvey’s notion of ‘predatory’ practices of primitive accumulation (2004 p. 74). Much to the agreement of Harvey, the historical process of accumulation continues to find new forms through which it is channeled in contemporary structures. “Wholly new mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession” have opened up that prey on existing structures of production to “keep the motor running” (p. 75). In the case of BTK, historical structures and contemporary forms of violence coalesce in multiple ways for capitalist gains. For instance, in the emergent illegal excavation in the deeper reaches of Malir, where the district boundaries exceed Karachi’s limits and into Jamshoro, the feudal land-owning system gives way to collaborations between landowning classes, who were granted land through colonial administration, and new corporate capital like BTK. In one instance reported in 2019, BTK officials were recorded making deals with a feudal landlord who presides over tens of villages and their farmland, all of whom have leased land from the landlord for well over a century (Dawn, 2019). However, given the class status of the feudal landlord, and the coming of real estate capital, the two temporally distinct forms of land ownership meet under a mutually beneficial deal that displaces peasants and farmers for the land to be bought up by BTK where the landlord is made a high stakes shareholder, a deal that is more profitable for the feudal landlord than continuing farming, and the villagers get little to no compensation from such dealings. The failure of the state in protecting peasant and tenant rights enables dispossession and corporate greed gives way to an appropriation of law and land that works within varied dynamics of global property and land speculation. In this way, not only are the farmers dispossessed of livelihood, but in the regions, for instance, where the boundaries of Malir and Jamshoro meet, the brazen violation of regulations for the protection of wildlife reserves also results in the depletion of environmental commons. Illegal sand mining in the Kirthar mountains, towards the northwestern edges of BTK is only one example of environmental degradation among many other violations presently at play. All of this happens and is made possible by the conditions of contestation over land that make the value of land comparable to gold, or what Gururani (2018) phrases as the point ‘when land *becomes* gold.’

Ib. War on Terror: Behind/Beyond the Scene

While the story of how BTK manipulated historical and contemporary legal and social structures to produce itself is one side of things, there are other socio-historical processes that need explication. The military, and militarization of urban life holds an important place in Karachi’s socio-spatial dynamics. In this section, I will talk about some of the ways in which the global War on Terror’s engulfing of Karachi within its folds, as one of the epicenters of terrorism, gave way to heightened ethnic prejudice that played out in space and on bodies that have historically become produced under a colonial racial hierarchy. Malir, as a district host to indigenous Sindhi and Baloch ethnic populations, and more recently a significant Afghan refugee population, can be understood as an area that represents part of an order of a racial hierarchy that got exploited for capital accumulation. The people there dispossessed of their land and corporate and military endeavors raking in the benefits.

Military violence is not new to South Asia. British colonialism first exploited Indian ethnic groups in the context of militarization and relationships to land in efforts to ‘document’ different

demographic structures in India in the early 19th century. Historians have pointed out the ways in which British colonialism produced itself through the racial distinction between the civilized European and the uncivil/inferior 'other' (Ansari 2022; Siddiqi 2016). However, part of the process of colonization was to consolidate and annex land through a series of deals made between colonial administrators and local merchant classes, feudal lords, upper caste religious leaders and ethnic groups the British termed as the 'martial races' (Ansari 2022). The Martial races were a category of sub-superior races produced by the British and consolidated through the grouping of ethnicities like the Punjabis, Pashtuns, Sikhs and Gurkhas that the British deemed as better suited to military service because of various qualities like 'build and hotheadedness' (Mallick 2018). The Sindhis, Bengalis and Baloch on the other hand were seen as 'backward, scrawny and black' (Sindh Gazette, 1900). Part of the promise of recruiting the martial races was to also designate them with land and titles, the very same lands and titles which many descendants hold to this day, exacerbating inequalities within the postcolonial social and spatial domains. The issuance of the martial races began as a response to the war of independence fought by the Indian insurgent forces in 1857 against Company Raj, the effects of which continue today in the ways in which the Pakistani military functions (Guha 1983). The military in Pakistan is effectively a product of the colonial social and political formation of ethnic divides. Scholars have pointed out how the center of power in Pakistan resides with the military and the political and industrial elite, which overwhelmingly constitute the Punjabi ethnic group, geographically concentrated in the province of Punjab and why this is a continuation of a colonial legacy (Akhtar & Rashid 2021). This power reproduces itself through an active marginalization of other ethnic groups like the Baloch and Sindhis. In effect, power produces itself by disempowering the 'other'. Many historians of postcolonial South Asia refer to the production of a distinct racial hierarchy that represents itself through caste and ethnicity that has come to mobilize itself, under neoliberalism, upon questions of land and its accumulation (Gururani 2020). Capital accumulation is therefore facilitated by the hierarchization of ethnic groups that assume power through political, monetary and military force. The Baloch, for instance, continue to fight for their right to resources in Balochistan against the military occupation of their cities. Similarly, in Karachi's peripheries, indigenous Baloch and Sindhi farming communities continue to struggle against land grabbing practices by the military and corporate elite. In the context of BTK's expansion, along with Sindhi and Baloch farmers, the racial marking of the Afghan refugee population living in peripheral Karachi is another important marker of how racial logics play out in the neoliberal context concerning the militarization and the facilitation of land grabs.

Across the span of the late 20th century, first during the Soviet-Afghan war, and then during the War on Terror, hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees settled in Karachi's peripheries, in existing villages, and often through squatting in empty plots of land that eventually took the shape of informal neighborhoods (Inskeep 2012). While Karachi has always existed in the political space of 'unrest', the federal and provincial governance has always come up with new ways to manage said unrest. In 2013, at the height of the war on terror began the Karachi Operation (KO). Shahana and Zahra (2019), in their research on the visualities of militarization of Karachi look at the ways in which land in the city was slowly accumulated by military forces who set up camps and demarcated no-go zones in many refugee areas under the guise of a clean-up operation. Between 2013 and 2015, two phases of the KO ensued, both through the involvement of the police, military and paramilitary rangers sanctioned by the then federal government. They show how the KO is tied to firstly, the conflation of the Afghan body with the potential for terror through the rhetoric

of illegality and criminality; secondly, how the KO, through cordoning off no-go zones in Malir and North Karachi produced the Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtun as bearers of violence and conflated the three ethnicities into one another; and finally, the ways in which two of the largest private real estate housing schemes, BTK and DHA City, emerged from these no-go zones as ‘testament to the militarized nature of real estate’ development. The zoning of areas with a high density of Pashtun/Afghan and Sindhi/Baloch residents renders visible the racial marking of territory and the violence that came thereafter. Under the garb of securitization, privatization and gentrification the military-BTK collaboration has transformed land that was previously held as common to bring it under global capital. This presents a very clear link between how global military dynamics affect context specific geographies, and how global and colonial racial hierarchies are pursued through military violence in the systematic effort to accumulate land. The militarization of Karachi, and the American War on Terror, therefore played a very important role in the emergence of BTK as a ‘sanitized’ sanctuary away from the insecurities of Karachi. The arrival of BTK thus, is co-constitutional with the arrival of rampant military forces in the city, and in some ways, they made each other possible and functional. Given that the military owns over 12% of all state land, it is unsurprising that the magnitude of power that it harbors may be used to occupy more land through corporate actors like BTK (Siddiqi 2016).

Wars, while destructive, are often the engines of economic and political transformations, many of which are not immediately visible (Khalili, 2013). While the war on terror was a concern for Afghanistan, the consequent economic and political strides made within the urban context of Karachi were significant markers of political and economic transformations. The emergence of mega projects such as highways, gated housing enclaves and securitization were all part of the infrastructure of the war. One of the many ways in which BTK’s development is intimately tied with the contingencies of the war is that it represents security, against the insecurity of war. Hiba Bou Akar (2018), in speaking through Beirut, reminds us that planning can often prey on fears and differences. The planning of BTK, in many ways is an example of how the fear of the Afghan, Baloch and Sindhi body was produced by the militarized state and how corporate actors took advantage of that and integrated these fears into contestations for land, where zoning, apartment sales and land deals are all made in the anticipation of a ‘war yet to come’ (Bou Akar 2018). Catering to the country’s elite, the project successfully borrowed from and contributed to the fears of war that were projected onto certain bodies in advancing its own illegal claims on land, making BTK out to be a secure and safe haven for those afraid. As an enclave, BTK advertises itself as such too, with high security parameters, CCTV cameras, check points, highly guarded entryways and armed personnel patrolling the area, one could easily see BTK, not just as a residential enclave, but a military barrack. The history of militarization, racialization and securitization in the country, and in the Malir district does not escape, therefore, the new modes of accruing financial capital that BTK has managed to harness through war.

Military personnel play a significant role in these dynamics too. In my interviews with residents of HAMG, military personnel were consistently invoked as the prime perpetrators of violence on them. I sat down with a family and asked them when they first heard of BTK’s arrival. Their response, “from the military colonel who came in and asked us to leave.” The militarized nature of violence, and the use of military logics, through personnel, military, state and non-state actors, were central to the occupation of land in Malir. Thus far I have attempted to give a glimpse of the structures of bureaucracy and military violence at play that connect BTK’s accumulation of land

to the dispossession faced by farmers in the villages of Malir. However, it is important now to detail the lived experience of confronting military, state and corporate brutality in the face of illegal occupation and predatory capitalism. The next section will show how militarized relationships began and are sustained within and through the engagements between BTK and village residents.

Ic. Arrival: Three acts of violence

‘In early 2012, the news of BTK’s arrival came through the revenue officer (*Mukhtiarkar*). He sent people who came and said “Bahria Town is coming, sell your land” (*Zameen Khapayo*)’ (HAMG 2 Interview 2024). This was the first time village residents in Malir would hear about BTK’s arrival into the district. The news, while at first inciting a sense of panic, would set into motion a series of events that would go on to materializing one of the largest land grabs for gated housing enclaves in the country’s history.

Consistent with Naziha Syed’s investigations, it was in-part through local government and municipal officers that the land in Malir was sold to, and in most instances, occupied by BTK. The arrival of BTK was narrated to me by many, in many different ways. The comment above came from a conversation I had with a *wadera* (elder) of the GDG village. GDG is located roughly 10 kilometers deep inside BTK, measuring the distance from the main gate located along the M-9 highway. From his account, BTK’s first arrival was noted in 2012 when farm land in Juma Morio Goth (JMG) was sold. JMG is also colloquially the ancestral village from which emerged all other villages, as families grew. These families, in the early part of the 20th century had settled at a few kilometers distance from each other forming the constellation of villages that are now eponymously named after their elders. BTK’s influence was already known because of the enterprise’s success in cities like Lahore and Islamabad, and so the news of BTK’s arrival was considered both as threat and opportunity. In this section I use my interviews with village residents to trace the ways in which land dispossession materialized and local responses to BTK’s land grabbing practices. My conversations led me to find that there were three primary ways in which the village residents encountered the arrival of BTK: irregular land deals; sudden depletion of resources; and racially motivated violence. I explore these dynamics to look at the complex and interconnected ways of land grabbing and what responses it elicited by the village residents. Since each village has had a different interaction with BTK, it is also important to note that violence and the response to said violence was also heterogeneous.

Irregular Land Deals

From my conversations, some village residents argued that “the news of BTK was a threat for our way of life, it was a news that shook us because we knew we would lose everything in the face of such power and influence, and we knew that BTK would come with the force of the police and the military.” While this quote may evoke the intent that villages inside BTK wanted to preserve their way of life against capitalist development, it would be misleading to assume that they don’t want better amenities and municipal provisions. However, given the larger narrative and mistrust garnered by real estate corporations, the fear of the loss of “everything” has more to say about the impending violence that development brings with itself, and evokes in communities that are expecting the arrival of a leviathan. This fear materialized first in the form of land deals that were

made by BTK's authorities, who often used police force and intermediaries to make contracts and deals with village residents. The elder of GDG stated that:

"People were uneducated about land dealings. The land right at the borders of the M9 superhighway, land that was leasable and usable (Survey and Khhatay wari zameen), that would be valued at billions of rupees, was sold for mere 700,000-800,000 PKR. Even occupied land (qabza land, not BTK, but a local-use land category) is also more expensive than that. The revenue officials sought a way into our villages by gradually creeping in through the cheap buying of land at the borders of the highway. Then through violence, through Rao Anwar, coercion, they captured more. They gave better rates later but not enough. For this village alone, we had a total of 2100 acres of land. They promised us a rate of 55 lakhs per acre for survey land (land-use category), and the lease-land (separate land category) would be 5 lakhs per acre. People agreed. But only 200 acres of land has been paid for, the rest they ate up. Out of 2100 acres only 200 acres have been paid for for the whole village. Sohail Memon (the revenue officer) still says he will pay us but hasn't yet. But of course, it has been ten years now, people have lost hope. Bahria Town itself has released him from duty so how will we get our money?" (AGD Interview 1 2024)

This is one of the many stories of incongruous land deals that were made when BTK began its endeavors in Malir. Within the span of an hour, the elder told me not only the ways in which financial dealings were manipulated and cut short, but also the ways in which existing businesses and ways of life were affected which lessened market value for the land surrounding the village:

"There used to be many people here before Bahria Town came along. There would be people coming here to buy things and eat food. This place would be crowded. Bahria was jealous. They came in and demolished everything. They demolished our businesses with the help of the DC (district commissioner). The nishaan (signs) of that destruction are still present in the rubble you see along the walls." (ADG Interview 2 2024)

Ruth Hall et al. (2015), in speaking about land deals, argue that land deals, as they 'hit the ground,' tend to have 'differentiated impacts and variegated political responses.' In the context of heightened militarization and the use of military force, the impact of land deals brought to the village residents in Malir was also shrouded by the fear of military persecution. In most instances, this persecution ensued in the form of a clear disregard for compensations for land and in many instances a brutal destruction of existing infrastructure. Remembering the promises of deals made, the wadera of ADG states:

"Before Bahria came, I had 8 poultry farms/sheds right in front, where the bungalows are. They came to me and said we will give you a fixed rate of 12 lakhs per farm/shed. That makes it around 96 Lakhs, which I have not received till date. This agreement was done in 2016." (ADG Interview 2 2024)

The unkept promises by corporate elites that are backed by the state and military is not a new phenomenon. Ayesha Siddiqa (2016), in her book length study of military capitalism in Pakistan has shown how the military perpetuates itself in social and political domains as a powerful entity through the regeneration of its own political economy, which she calls *Milbus*. Military capital, or milbus, allows the military to enact power and rule in the ways they want to. In totalitarian military

regimes like Pakistan, it is this capital that moves military power further, and the power for those who associate with the military. Milbus therefore includes the unaccounted-for capital and land holdings that the military and its associates accrue and use. Because BTK is under the patronage of the military, it becomes one of the channels through which military capital and power is enforced. Therefore, irregular financial deals and illegal use of military force for land grabs in the peripheries of Karachi goes unquestioned and justified through the presence and mobilization of milbus. Of course, it is also not as simple as uniformed men entering a space and setting up camps. Processes of land grabs, because of the scale and political uncertainties, require negotiations and alliances. Corporate actors like BTK in collusion with military capital find ways to coerce, harass and manipulate land deals, often using state and non-state institutions and actors to advance their claims. A resident of ADG signaled to these alliances and processes by telling me about how BTK additionally employed the police to further enforce their deals:

“In the very beginning there were many threats to people. People were picked up in the middle of the night from their homes. Those who were not signing their land off to BTK, they were threatened, blackmailed and were persecuted (by way of the police filing false reports), and coerced into giving up their land. The land was occupied (Qabza). The main person then was Rao Anwar, who was conducting these raids against us. This started from 2014, ever since the construction of Bahria Town began on this land.” (ADG Interview 3 2024)

Land deals, as is evident, can be very violent. However, while displacement, coercion and other consequences emerge, the responses to land deals can also show us conflicting desires by those affected, about inclusion, exclusion, resentment and hope. Hall et al. (2015) remind us that in some cases, ‘attitudes towards land grabs may be conditioned by the terms of inclusion’ (pg. 474) which is to say, that in the instances when deals were made, the terms of inclusion, whether in the form of monetary compensation or the provision of facilities, became central to the imagination of village residents inside BTK. Interestingly, having demonstrated an egregious amount of violence, BTK’s arrival was first met with a promise, that of development. This promise was the same as the one advertised all over the media and in their marketing campaigns. The villages in Malir, while having lived in their own ways of life, were still always economically tied to Karachi through the supply of agricultural harvest. Therefore, a desire for paved roads, proper electricity lines and gas supply, along with municipal provisions was always present. Much of this desire was politically oriented towards the politicians who they would vote for, which was predominantly the PPP. However, BTK’s arrival signaled a different source through which this possible development could take place. Many of the land deals, some of which stated above, were made in-part to accommodate this promise. While BTK turned its head to this promise, it continues to linger in the hopes of some of the village residents:

“The supreme court had ordered Bahria Town, that for the six or seven villages that are inside Bahria Town, Bahria is to take responsibility in terms of providing facilities of water, gas and electricity. I have the 102 page ruling printed with me. Bahria has been made responsible. They are not to make any more issues with the villages either. I have spoken with them, and they said when the construction will pass through this village, they will give us an electric connection. However, when exactly this will happen, they have not said. Although Bahria is not responsible for development inside the village boundaries, for road pavements and such, the town government

which is responsible, only comes here when it's election time. So, we are kept waiting forever.” (ADG Interview 2 2024)

While land deals can bring up these analyses, of violence, military capital and desires for inclusion and incorporation, they are also features of the larger structural land grabbing machinery that was deployed in Malir. In an almost war-like state, the interconnectedness of the military, police, corporate, bureaucratic and local elites in the transformation and financialization of Malir's land for/through real estate purposes urges us to think more expansively about the variegated processes involved in the dynamics of urbanization in Karachi. Land deals being one of the ways in which the project of urbanization is carried forward, coercive resource depletion being another. This dynamic is consistent with instances of colonial land deals that were made for the forced selling of land across India, Africa, Latin America and elsewhere. The form that land deals take today in Malir are reflective of neo-colonial processes of extractivism that Cabrera Pacheco (2017) has spoken of through the case of Mexico.

Resource Depletion

Accounts of landowners, landlords, militaries and states stripping people of their resources are widely documented. While the irregular financial dealings made BTK into an occupier of land, the entity, through various channels, also systematically dispossessed the villages of their existing resources. In an effort to displace entirely a way of life, and in the process of BTK's ongoing construction of housing neighborhoods, parks, squares and roads, many resources that were previously commonly shared among villages were slowly taken over by BTK. The most important of these resources was water.

Nawaz, a resident of HAMG stated that:

“Before BTK, we used to bore wells to get water for our farms. We had four wells, each with a depth of about 50 ft, and because we are located between the Langheji and Malir rivers, the water table was very high, so we didn't have to dig deep. We would find water at 35ft. Once Bahria came in, they dug a 1000 ft deep well to create artificial lakes for the golf course and to provide water for its facilities, leaving our wells dry overnight. Now, if we ask for access to this water, they say that the water cannot be provided to our jurisdiction behind the wall, which means we have to scavenge for water. I drive a tanker truck to get water from outside BTK and bring it back for daily use now” (HAMG Interview 4, 2024).

According to vernacular history, in the 1920s, 'foreigners' came to Malir to dig for oil, and instead they found water. While they left disappointed, this water became part of the reason why many villages relocated from JMG to a few kilometers north. It became a source of livelihood and a way for the tribes to populate the arid area with farms and grazing pastures. The remnants of colonial era wells are spread out across the Malir region today, some dilapidated, others still in use for villages that find themselves outside of development's immediate ambit.



Figure 8 (Author, 2024) Inside DGG

This anecdote shows how natural resources become commodified and weaponized. Moreover, it also suggests that water is equally a resource mobilized to strengthen property relations, where the exchange value of land is drawn out of the subterranean resources it may hold. Water that was used for farming was slowly taken away for infrastructural gains. Ghertner (2015) has similarly argued, by looking at the superterranean politics of ‘air’ to racially divide populations in India, that such tactics have colonial roots reinforcing hierarchical control through a separation of climates, which filters through in the population’s daily lives and hinders possibilities for survival. Water in the case of these villages became a marker of the ongoing and impending dispossession of livelihood upon the immediate arrival of BTK. Over the years, BTK has also changed the routes of the Langheji river and has subsequently made a concretized canal out of an organically flowing stream to design inaccessibility.

Stripping away resources like water from farming communities for corporate gains is also not a new phenomenon. We see in Gaza, for instance, the ways in which Israel manipulates and controls resources that are let in and out. Research has shown how food is measured meticulously to only fulfil bare nutritional levels for the population to just survive (Smith and Isleem 2017). Similarly, research done by Ayesha Siddiq (2016) shows how the Pakistani paramilitary forces occupied villages and farmland in Okara, depleting their resources, restricting their mobility and through other pressure tactics. These instances only make visible the militaristic ways in which capitalist forces are able to make claims over land that is not theirs.

Water, much like land, also has a history tied within the webs of colonial, postcolonial and military regimes of power. And much like land, water too has been used to propel a racialized logic of administering peripheral regions. Asim Sajjad Akhter (2022) recently published an article that critically examined the history of hydropower systems and the production of a racial internal periphery in Pakistan. He looks at how during the construction of large-scale dams in the 1960s, the military regime of Ayub Khan designated entire regions of Pakistan as ‘backward,’ a term borrowed from colonial era racial imaginaries of territories. Speaking through the Pashtun population, he shows that the racialization of the internal periphery of the country was integral in advancing the regime’s modernist aspirations that set their focus on infrastructural development. Many of the dams constructed in the mid to late 20th century moment frequently came at the cost of displacements, evictions and erasures of entire communities, often those that were deemed

‘tribal,’ another racializing category first invoked under colonialism. The construction of a 1000 ft boring well to water the high-modern golf courses can then be viewed as a 21st century iteration of hydraulic dispossession reminiscent of the 60s. Confining villages behind walls, and following similar narratives that farmers in Malir are backward, and that BTK aims to ‘develop’ the ‘barren wastelands’ are invocations of racial logics, of assigning differences to people, that continue to be used in the ultimate aspirations for power, capital and modernity.

Racialized Violence

BTK’s arrival, while making irregular land deals and depleting resources, simultaneously was marked by a reproduction of ethnic/racialized violence. Across the scope of this thesis, while I try to make sense of the modalities of ABD, racial violence configures as a thread that continues to run parallel to the story of dispossession. To study violence that is racialized, I borrow from Hazel Carby’s (2019) definition who argues that “race has not to do with what people are, but how they are classified. It becomes a technology that assigns differences between people, communities and regions” (pg. 60). In Pakistan, as Akhter (2022) has shown, racialization takes effect through a colonially contiguous view of peripheral regions in the country, so basically dissolving all tribal, communal, farming, pastoral, nomadic, lower caste, peasant communities within a racial ambit that is posited against the state’s modernist aspiration. Accumulation of capital therefore, is only possible through a racializing of certain bodies, facilitating capitalist value creation that considers certain ethnicities as racially ‘backward’ or ‘inferior’. BTK, as part of the larger consortium of corporate elites with military and state ties, and as an entity withholding the means to development, naturally falls in line, employing colonialist racial logics to displace, dispossess and occupy land. Of course, the ways in which these racializing logics materialize can vary between the enforcement of police violence, deployment of media narratives, modes of securitization etc.

The figure of Rao Anwar, a police officer, repeatedly emerged in my interviews as a signifier of racialized state violence. In one village, I was told that “he came to us and said we could either leave quietly or be labeled as Baloch criminals/terrorists”. In line with the military-state’s narrative of the Baloch insurgent movements as “anti-state terrorists” in public discourse, the Baloch in Malir were equally threatened by such sanctioning. In another interview, he is mentioned as having curated a set up to eliminate villagers.

“He came to us to tell us to leave our village. We resisted and he brought 5-6 Afghans here. He said he would make a show out of this village. Our people in the police said he would kill the Afghans he brought, along with some villagers. He wanted to frame us all in showing that the Afghans are involved in this village somehow, rendering all of us as terrorists in the official papers. He has done this many times before. Rao Anwar was a favorite of Zardari so he could do this kind of stuff and get away with it.” (HAMG Interview 5 2024)

An account like this is not unheard of by figures like Rao Anwar, who were one part of a web of figures and institutions all tied in making BTK happen. The use of and prejudice against Afghan refugees, who were also located in the northern peripheries of Karachi, melted into the pre-existing political prejudice against the Baloch and Sindhis and thus, such racialized framings were reproduced to incite violence and illegally evict people of their villages. Outside of this interview, Naziha Syed (2017) has also documented similar threats upon villages like JMG and others. Using this one police officer, the institutions were able to inform a planning of land at a scale unmatched

before: 100+ sq kms of a walled city. He was one of many actors in this play happening in the backgrounds of a war that concerned not only Pakistan but much of the world.

The violence in Malir, then, is deeply spatialized and racialized. On paper, it appears as progress: 20,000 acres transformed for real estate, new roads built, walls erected for “security.” But within the villages, these developments materialize as forms of suffocation. In DGG, for instance, I observed how checkpoints fragmented the daily lives of residents. Young men were stopped arbitrarily, asked to present ID cards, and questioned for simply moving through their own neighborhoods. “They look at our clothes, our accents,” one person told me, “that is enough for them to decide we don’t belong” (Conversation with men on the sidewalks inside BTK, 2024)

These everyday interactions reflect what scholars describe as death-worlds where certain subjects are marked for exclusion, rendered ungrievable, and made killable (Gayer 2007). The residents of these villages, largely Sindhi and Baloch, become racialized not only through language and appearance but through cartographic and bureaucratic techniques. Mapping the violence upon territories that are deemed as ‘wastelands’ enables BTK to expel populations based on colonial classifications of certain ethnicities. These classifications, having remained present and perpetuated within civil and military bureaucratic systems propel further the aspirations of accumulation of capital. Dispossession is therefore met with extreme forms of violence that is rooted in a racialized classification of farming populations in Malir. Moreover, the spatial logic of the BTK project converges with the post-9/11 security paradigm in which Pashtun and Afghan refugees, along with indigenous ethnic groups, are figured as potential insurgents and therefore, must be dealt with. As I witnessed, this logic enables the state to practice selective governance: distributing development to some, and discipline to others (Roy 2009).

It was also evident that this racialized violence was not confined to the moment of displacement, it continues in the everyday afterlives of enclosure. In several interviews, I encountered people who described the walls around their village not as protective boundaries, but as tools of control. “We cannot grow crops like before,” one man told me. “There’s no water. And if something goes wrong, we can’t even call the police, they say we live inside Bahria, and that’s private land.” Here, the wall functions not only as a physical enclosure but as a jurisdictional abyss, a place where the state retracts its responsibility while continuing to exercise violent sovereignty.

This paradox, of being governed without being protected, lies at the heart of racialized capitalism. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007 pg. 247) reminds us, “racism, specifically, is the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death”. The story of BTK makes visible how this vulnerability is not accidental but designed: a function of securitized development, colonial land law, and elite-military alliances that turn racialized ethnicities like the Baloch, Sindhi and Afghan into obstacles to be cleared, assets to be managed, or threats to be eliminated.

In reflecting on these encounters and testimonies of the arrival of BTK, I turn to an underlying question of this thesis: What kind of city is being built when entire populations are rendered redundant in the name of modernity? In BTK, what emerges is not merely a new urban aesthetic, but a militarized urbanism in which racialized disposability becomes central to the production of land value. Violence here is not incidental to development, it is constitutive of it. Security and mobility, as key features of everyday life in the making of Malir since BTK’s arrive, are sites

where violence is operated. In the next section, I will look at how, once BTK arrived, the erection of walls around villages served as heterogeneous mediators of mobility, dispossession and securitization, reproducing everyday impediments to the making of life for village residents.

II. “Are we the criminals?” Securitization and Mobility

Through ethnographic accounts from observations and interviews inside villages, I attempt to show in this section how the walls surrounding the villages, walls around BTK and gates become mediating infrastructures of security and mobility. In doing so, I will show the ways in which everyday mechanisms of securitization are created, sustained and reproduced within dispossession and racialized operating logics. The two sub sections on Securitization and Mobility below, go into a deeper analysis, accounting firstly, for the ways in which security logics construct insecurity and contribute to the financialization of real estate, and secondly, looking at how mobility is situated and socialized within the shifting spatial arrangement of BTK. As the walls emerge and land is usurped by housing schemes, what role does securitization play and how do people become im/mobile?

IIa. Securitization

Several scholars have shown the relationship between securitization and capital accumulation. Masse and Lunstrum (2016), for instance state that capital accumulation, often tied to land and resource enclosure, is enabled by practices and logics of security. Security logics, moreover, increasingly provoke the dispossession of vulnerable communities, thereby enabling accumulation. They name this process *accumulation by securitization*. Following this line of inquiry, Cristina Rojas (2016) elsewhere has sought to study the ways in which imaginaries of security are harnessed through dispossession, which she calls, *securitization by dispossession*. In either conceptualization, the processes of accumulation, dispossession and securitization are intimately tied to one another and enable each other in various ways. Deploying strategies of securitization has been one of the formative ways through which BTK has been able to expand itself. Securitization, as this section will argue, was not an event, but is rather a continuous process through which BTK is able to reproduce itself as an enclave. This is to say, that it is not in the building of the walls, gates and barriers that security manifests itself, but rather the everyday and mundane ways in which these features are interacted with and responded to by the people passing by them. More specifically, it is in the ways that the village residents regularly interact with security features that enables the continuous bind of security and insecurity that become central BTK’s infrastructural politics. Security features therefore make and unmake residents of villages and BTK itself, each time they are interacted with and moved through. Dispossession, therefore is also a consistent feature of life for the village residents inside BTK. Each instance of passing through security checks marks the dispossession of their freedoms. After some brief context, I will turn to ethnographic engagements with village residents to ground this analysis in an empirical case.

As I have stated elsewhere in this chapter (see section Ia), walls were often the first markers of securitization and claim making in the occupation of land in Malir. Historically, from the first British encampments and barracks in the 19th century, to the Pakistani military’s cantonments in the immediate aftermath of partition, to the first walls built that signaled BTK’s arrival in the 21st

century, Malir has been riddled with a history of enclosure-making. Across the district's history, the aims of walling and gating have firstly been to enclose and secondly, to securitize land. BTK has one main gate that serves as the primary entry point into the enclave through the highway, and several smaller gates across its boundary wall that lead into villages and service lanes outside the enclave. The villages inside BTK are walled from all sides but without formal gates for entry and exit. Instead these villages have openings where a gate would have been placed but is not. Some villages therefore have informal mechanisms of gating such as wooden slabs posted along the opening to bar/allow entry/exit (See fig. 13). The BTK gate on the other hand, has an intimidating security apparatus. Large metal gates, barriers, barricades, CCV camera, armed guards, metal detectors, bomb squads, signs, siren lights, ID checks and other miscellaneous forms of securitization infrastructure. Passing through this assortment of security checks makes even a regular visitor feel as if crossing border control of some kind. And it is in this simulation of border control features that a different kind of city is made to be imagined as one enters the enclave. BTK is after advertised, almost as an antithesis to Karachi, away from the insecurity, density, waste and crime of the city, and into a haven that is clean, green and peaceful. This simulation of the binary of security/insecurity however, is only produced through the process of entering, exiting and interacting with the security apparatus that is put in place. Studying informal enclave making practices in Karachi Sobia Kaker (2013) argues that feeling of security and insecurity are reproduced through the emplacement of security/enclavising infrastructure that forever sustains a relationship of fear. Taking Karachi's conflict ridden political and public space as a narrative point, private gated housing enclaves are produced in such a way that they mobilize support for security. Setha Low (2004) would argue that these forms of privatized security can and should be seen otherwise as features of racial segregation that is tied to class.



Figure 9 (Author, 2024) BTK main gate and its security apparatus. Signs barring entry of rickshaws and motorcyclists without helmets are abundant along with surveillance cameras, barricades and armed guards patrolling the entrance.

While security infrastructure at the main gate serves as a portal entry into a new city for the visitors, it is not so much the case for the residents of the villages who already reside inside. For them this

level of security was never needed, and it ever existed when the land was mostly used for farming. According to a resident of DGG, the gates and walls that BTK has built only serve to protect the investment and speculative pricing that they have fictively invented and imposed on the land. This is the classic case of land transformation, from agrarian to real estate, where land prices increased exponentially upon its occupation and transformation. According to the village residents, selling their farmland was never a concern, because farming sustained them and life was peaceful. Internal village problems would always be resolved within the community. However, upon the occupation, walling and gating of their land, the fear has only increased, much like the value of the land. Therefore, the security infrastructure enables a certain financialization of land while enabling an insecurity for those who still inhabit it. Within the field of speculative urbanisms Michael Goldman (2020) has studied the process through which Bangalore was produced under the ‘global-city’ imaginary. His account shows that mass scale dispossession of farming and village communities in Bangalore happened through shifting practices of global finance capital and its national and local partners that created the conditions for dispossession of local residents and simultaneously the financialization of regional economy. Similarly, BTK’s practices of securitization are intertwined with the financialization of Malir’s land through real estate speculation. Asim Sajjad Akhtar and Ammar Rashid (2021) speak of this phenomenon in the case of Bahria Town and DHA’s projects in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. His account shows that it was through the dispossession of villages, rooted in ethnic discrimination, in the rural areas of the capital region of Pakistan that a financialization of real estate making was possible. For the village residents who have managed to stay put, however, the story of financialization through securitization only comes at the cost of their dispossession and production of insecurity among them.

During one of my visits inside BTK, as I passed through the main gate, I saw a police car with officers interrogating some men who seemed to be wanting to enter the gate on foot, through the pedestrian entrance. I entered and waited for them, to see if they can make it inside so I may find out if they indeed live inside. An hour later, they entered and I approached them a little past the gate. As I approached them to ask some questions, their immediate response was to not speak to me, and they told me they just want to go home. A little while later, as I was walking inside BTK, I saw them again and said hello, to which they asked me what I’m trying to do there. I responded with the intentions and questions of my thesis and they said, well “you saw what happened to us back there, at the gate, and this is quite normal for us to go through” (Conversation with village residents inside BTK, 2024). They were residents of villages inside BTK and in their own way, they told me that they work as laborers outside BTK, because BTK denies them any employment. The went on to speak to the securitization, stating that there was never a need for this level of interrogation.

“We pass by here every single day, and it is almost always the same guards, and on occasion the police officers, who claim that we threaten the security of BTK simply because we look a certain way. What can we do? We are laborers, so of course we haven’t showered because we haven’t gotten home, which is inside, beyond the gate. How can we shower when our water has been cut? How can we look decent when we sweat all day trying to earn a living? What did we do to deserve this? They say we are bringing in weapon and danger, but how do they think we would be able to afford anything, let alone weapons. They are the ones who put up the gates and security, not us. We were here always, long before them.” (Interview with Village residents inside BTK, 2024)

This interaction reveals that the residents of villages inside are produced as objects of fear, therefore requiring security, according to BTK logic. However, fear here is an imagined thing, whereby the sentiment is mobilized to reproduce a racial differentiation and an increased level of paranoia that clamps down on the villages even further. More than that, securitization of this kind can be understood as a form of disciplining and oppressing people to put them in their place. It is not the villages then that are to be feared, but rather the security infrastructure of BTK itself. In producing an object of fear, BTK itself becomes the fearing force. This fear is of course, mobilized in service of garnering support for projects like BTK, for the erection of more walls and more gates.

While the main gate tells the story of how security infrastructure can turn itself into a spectacle to meet various ends for entities like BTK, the smaller gates along BTK's boundary wall and the entries into and out of the villages also serve as points marking certain forms of securitization. The main gate is open at all times of the day, 24/7, but the smaller gates are timed. They are only open between 6am and 9pm. The gates usually have one or two armed guards, signs on metal boards and CCTV cameras. Some residents of the villages, like those in HAMG, stated that they have, over the years, frequently found themselves entering into physical encounters with the police and security at BTK's smaller gates due to frustration and constant harassment. These fights over a period of time have determined their position as "trouble makers" or in their own words, "we are people who are not to be messed with" and so sometimes, they negotiate their access into and out of the gates informally and through localized interactions. Some gate-guards, for instance, have now built a relationship with some of the residents, specifically concerning who guards the gate at any given moment, and so their mobilities are made just a little bit convenient. Some residents stated that there are times when they have faced immense impediments against security infrastructure, but there also have been times when they have been able to pass through owing to the mercy of the guard.

Nonetheless, this convenience is self-governed and attempts to stay outside of the state's gaze, improvising the building of a hole in the wall of sorts. Some scholars have argued in contradiction to the agentic role of resistance in such conditions, where those who are able to establish a relationship between security infrastructures and their mobilities also become guardians of a sustained relationship of state-like functions. Despite the ease of mobility for some, the gates do still represent a permanence of the securitized function of inhibiting mobility for others, producing some as the 'agents of the state'. Therefore, the formation of a securitized subject who is mobile renders those who defy and deny BTK's regulations as immobile and confined. So, there is a transformation of subjectivity that is heterogeneous in the making and interaction of walls erected by BTK. While the friction and porosity of walls allows for transgressions, the enclosure, confinement and infrastructural regulations around the walls remain salient in the everyday making and unmaking of subject-hoods in the compound.

Securitization near the entrance of the villages tells yet another story. The walls of the villages, on the one hand protect the villages from further encroachment of land by BTK, they simultaneously also contain territorially a population that is racialized and classed through military and capitalist relations. Bibi of HAMG told me that at many instances, when the police or BTK's security forces have tried to enter their village, the villagers pick up sticks and run behind them or throw stones at them in self-defense. Security here, they argue, is a façade, where they "are constantly at risk of

being hounded by these wolves”. The many parameters of fear, layers of insecurity, multiple infrastructures of security that are spatially and temporally spread, all come together in the dispossession of everyday feelings of being at home. According to Bibi, every day is a war, echoing Low’s comment of how sites of walls, given their porosity, become sites of everyday war. Security for the villages then, in many ways, then is also self-organized. This means that residents of villages negotiate their survival against BTK’s regime sometimes on their own terms. The articulation of responses to occupation varies and is structured through a relational experience of dispossession. I will elaborate more on this in the coming sections. Continuing my research on BTK and the villages, I arrived at another intersection, and that is of mobility. Mobility, through the mechanisms within which it is enabled and disabled is also a key feature in the accumulation of capital and dispossession of villages. Mobility, because it belongs to the realm of the everyday where people become directly affected through the prospect of being im/mobile, significantly contributes to how village residents negotiate survival and how they respond to and are implicated in the reproduction of BTK and its goals.

IIb. Mobility

The ways in which BTK organizes and governs its expansion does not only contribute to an imprisonment of people inside villages, securitization and dispossession, but also regulates bodies in such a way that exacerbates everyday impediments to mobility. More than just surveilling movements, the building of housing communities and a complex web of link-roads, have obstructed the villages from accessing one another or from entering and exiting BTK’s walls. This has also intentionally contributed to breaking communities apart to avoid forms of resistance. Extensively long U-turns, barricades and patrol infrastructures inhibit walkability and the possibility to make their own paths as they would before. The road network was in fact one of the first infrastructures (along with a boundary wall) implemented in the region, before the village walls and before the housing complexes. Roads were laid out as a first step to separate and distinguish between populations that had long lived in the region and those who the land was being transformed for.



Figure 10 (Author, 2024) Wall encircling DGG

One of the questions I asked all my respondents, was to find out the difference in travel time to access other villages, the city center of Karachi, resources and hospitals, before BTK and now. Across my interviews, the residents uniformly stated that the travel time has increased because of the construction of a complex network of roads. One resident stated that while it took him 15 minutes on a motorbike to go from his village to the nearest other village, it takes him well above 45 minutes now. Previously, paved road networks did not exist, there was only unpaved mud roads that people would use their motorbikes on, although mostly people would trek by foot. Today, walkability on highway-like roads inside BTK has become incredibly difficult. This is not only because of the physical expanse of the roads, but also because of a lack of the possibility for them to cut through farms and unpaved territory which they formerly had access to. Moreover, due to the climatic stress of heat that has emerged from the cutting down of trees, concretizing of land, erasure of farms and restricting the flow of tributaries of water, the ease with which people were able to walk before has all but disappeared. Similarly, access to nearest hospitals, schools, supermarkets and other places that they require access to has become difficult and costly. The facilities BTK provides are not designed for them so they cannot afford to be consumers inside. The cost of affording fuel is already a big burden.

Mobility mostly came up as an impediment to accessing resources such as water, schooling, hospitals and everyday materials. The spatial rearrangement of their land was noted as the primary cause of this impediment. For instance, my respondent in DGG stated:

“When they built the walls, we were all scrambling to find a way to manage our lives because we suddenly had a barrier to the outside world. We managed to find some ways but they hinder our everyday survival. One day, my neighbor got very sick in the middle of the night and needed to be hospitalized. Before the walls and before BTK, we would be able to take him on a motorbike to the nearest village and see a doctor, or someone from an adjoining village would be able to come and tend to him. But this time, we tried to access the nearest gate and it was closed because of their timings and they did not open the gate. The main gate was open but it was too far for us. The hospitals inside BTK are too expensive, and the cost of getting him to a doctor inside Karachi was too high and there was no means for us to take him there. He passed away and we blame his death on BTK. Many deaths have happened like this, where people die because they don’t have access to a hospital or to resources.” (DGG Interview 1 2024)

Many scholars have studied the ways in which predatory practices of capitalism follow intricate everyday instances that deny dispossessed and displaced people the right to resources and the ability to access them. Scholars who study Palestine and Israel’s settler colonialism have long identified such practices in the reproduction of regimes of control, subjecting a population to a necropolitical order. Mobility becomes a way through which BTK control over territory is managed as it exercises its power in enabling the Baloch and Sindhi villages inside the compound to become exposed to death in order to harness power and capital.

At another instance, a resident of HAMG highlighted the impediments to education for the children of the village. According to her:

“We had a small school with one teacher who would come from a nearby village to teach our kids. He would come on a motorcycle every morning and our kids would get an education. When BTK

first erected its boundary wall, the path between our village and the teacher's village was cut and he had to make an extensive travel to come here. While he would have a direct path to our village before, he now came through the main gate because he would have to get on to the highway from his village. He did that for a while, but soon after, BTK demolished the one-room building we had as a school and the teacher also stopped coming. These children have not gone to school and have not gotten an education since" (HAMG Interview 4 2024).

In building up the infrastructure of real estate, bordering and securing land becomes an important site upon which the question of enclosure and mobility rests. Cunningham and Heyman (2004) address this question within the field of border studies, that the creation of the borders ties normative forms of enclosures and mobilities together, where the political implications of border rules are made visible. In erecting a boundary wall, BTK hinders the mobility and transfer of goods, people and knowledge for politically motivated goals. Similar to Smith & Isleem's (2017) analysis of 'de-development' of Gaza through the lens of farming, education becomes that for the villages inside BTK. This case shows that mechanisms of mobility and being mobile are used by BTK to hinder intellectual development, and in many ways, they make an effort to not allow certain populations to develop.

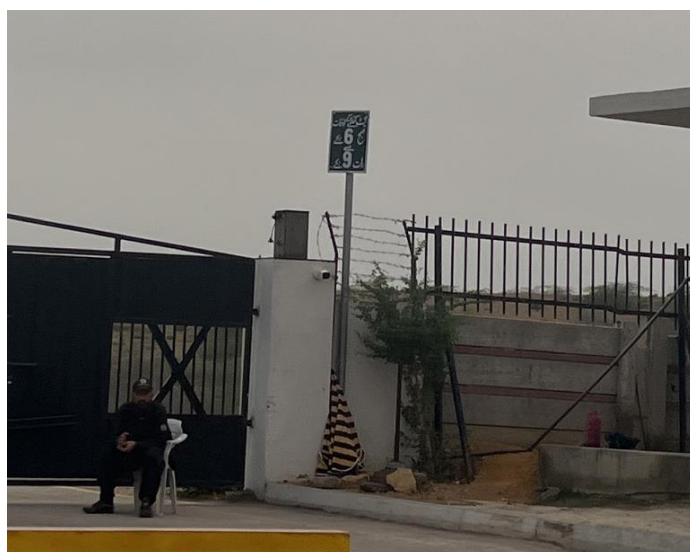


Figure 11 (Author, 2024) Security apparatus at the smaller gates. Signs depicting gate closing and opening times.

Mobility for villagers inside BTK is doubly tied to their status as Baloch and Sindhi villagers and as residents inside the boundary of the gated housing enclave. Therefore, the restrictions imposed on them and their responses to said restrictions are also tied along those identifiers. As I have explored elsewhere, the Baloch and Sindhi population has been historically marginalized and continues to be categorized as 'violent' and a threat to the state and to development. This narrative opens up a host of other problems that they face when entering and exiting BTK. One village resident stated:

"If we enter or exit through the main gate at night, we are routinely harassed and blamed for stealing, or having committed some kind of crime out of the blue, and we have to spend extra time dealing with the authorities to let us enter or to let us out. If we bring something with us that we have bought, whether it is construction material for a house inside the village or food, or even

clothes, we are inspected thoroughly. We have been given cards that state that we live inside BTK, so the only privilege we get is that we don't have to pay the toll tax when entering or exiting Karachi. However, those cards mean nothing when we are harassed almost every time we enter and exit our own homes. Once I was bringing in a generator to power some of the houses inside my village, and they stopped me at the gate to ask questions about why I'm bringing in a generator. They will pick on just about anything. Our mobility is highly monitored and restricted.” (DGG Interview 2 2024)

These remarks show that mobility plays a central role in the construction of lives and livelihoods for the villages and its residents. At the same time, the fact of being and needing to be mobile also introduces them to incredible amounts of violence. The body of the village resident therefore, is subjected daily to these forms of impediments and violences. And it is through this subjection to violence and harassment that BTK is able to construct paths of mobility for certain populations. Ultimately this is also a tactic of control and securitization in order to maintain hegemonic power over the land they have occupied. This form of harassment is also indicative of militaristic practices that seep into BTK's strategy of governance, informing its way of operation.

As we have so far seen, the daily life of villagers inside BTK is produced through a series of contestations that is layers with historical and contemporary structures of oppression. In this, modes of securitization, racialization and the subjection to a rearranged spatial order all affects patterns of mobility and therefore, access into and out of the negotiations that structure life. The increasing hostility and insecurity that emerges through these dynamics and processes is also not limited to Malir. Karachi as a city, is simultaneously structures through people's ability to navigate what Kaker (2024) calls *ordinary insecurity*. However, it is in people's ability to respond to insecurities, oppressive forces and capitalism that we see some sense of agency and movement towards hope. The next section will discuss this agency in light of the responses to BTK's occupation. I will explore the role of resistance and the many forms it takes. In doing so, the next section will show that the residents of Malir and of the villages inside BTK are employing a certain kind of political consciousness that enables them to resist, in ways, the occupation of their land and their social practices. I am adding this section in order to show that possibilities for resistance exist and have long existed in the face of brutal oppression and capitalism.

III. Acts of Resistance

During my research, one thing became very clear: the victims of BTK's assault on Malir's land were not mere passive recipients of violence. They were, and continue to be, active participants in the struggle for the preservation of their way of life and their land. In contexts characterized by rapid urbanization, extreme inequality and legacies of colonialism, land is often of vital social and economic importance as the “foundation for work, shelter, food and community” (Lombard & Rakodi, 2016). In the context of Malir, relationships to land, while being that of livelihood, have also over centuries become an emotional relation. Therefore, I suggest a need to pay closer attention to the affective dimensions through which relationships to land are produced and then mobilized in an effort to preserve it. Resistance against occupation emerges from various appropriations of land in material and discursive ways. Additionally, because of the ways in which Malir has been securitized by state and supra-state actors (see previous sections), the district residents' history and rootedness with land have, over recent years, become co-produced with

processes of safeguarding and managing insecurities. By engaging with authorities and institutions, certain practices and tactics of securitization have been adopted by the residents of the villages in order to harness power (Peluso and Lund 2011). For instance, the military-state's use of force is appropriated by the villagers who use physical force against any official that enters their village (violence met with violence, albeit at different scales and shaped by power imbalances), or the phenomenon of corporate enclaving of land is borrowed to enclave and wall the villages through legal means and sometimes the informal barricading of entrances with wooden slabs. Ideas and forms of resistance in context specific cases thus, are socially and politically produced at multiple scales; they are also, as Tilly and Tarrow (2007) reminds us, historically specific. Therefore, situated in the postcolonial and a historically specific South Asian experience, the practices of solidarity building or the collectivities of disjointed, yet parallel practices of non-collective action in a politically closed and technologically limited setting should be understood from the grounded practices and actions of actors who assert claims to action at an everyday scale by deploying an affective relationship to land (Bayat 2010).

In order to expand on how political action is mobilized by village residents against BTK, I take up various acts and inquire about their insurgent qualities (Bayat 2010). These actions include, but are not limited to, the domains of organized protests, legal-formal, informal and the everyday that discursively produce the larger sentiment of resisting enclosure and occupation that are negotiated in and through landed practices. While there are manifest ways in which village residents resist, I also want to highlight that because of the varied experiences of occupation within BTK, not all forms of resistance are equally translatable in action. Different villages, while collectively existing under BTK's real estate regime, respond to BTK's land-grabbing tactics differently. An analysis of differentiated forms of resistance and their different effects also exemplifies and harkens back to the different scales of violence experienced and the many negotiated claims made, under which the accumulation of land in Malir and the consequent dispossession of villagers materializes. In the sub-chapters below, I present some of my findings from interviews and conversations I had with village residents and draw from ethnographic observations carried out during my field work.

IIIa. Protests and Tours

In 2021, a major protest was held at the gates of BTK. Over 120 peaceful protestors were arrested, and the main gate of BTK was aflame (Baloch, 2021). This was a protest organized by various Sindhi nationalist political parties (JSQM, SUP, JS & AT). The main aim of the protest was to act against BTK's illegal occupation of Sindh's land. Towards the end of the protest, the headlines all over national news stated that Sindhi nationalists have set fire to BTK's main gate, and images depicting violence were circling the media, positing Sindhi nationalists as violent terrorists. After a year of investigative journalist accounts, through chemical analysis, CCTV footage and media analysis, it appeared that it was BTK's self-hired goons who in fact set fire to the gate to create a spectacle out of the event. BTK also actively left the black-soot burn marks on the gate for over a year, without any attempts to repaint it. This clearly showed that there is an active effort towards a very specific kind of production of BTK. One that is at war with the Sindhi and the Baloch, where the Sindhi and Baloch body is produced as uncivil and backward. This protest was seen as a protest against modernity and development. This was of course, the discourse spread all over the media.

In my conversations with village residents of HAMG, ADG and DGG, I asked about whether they joined the 2021 protest and they all had the same answer, that even if they wanted to they couldn't. BTK put up barriers to bar entry towards the gate much before the protest even gained momentum. They barred entries especially for the village residents along their walled openings, so that they are not be able to join. Some residents stated that they knew the fall out of the protest would affect them in many ways. And it did happen. After the protest, security checks became stricter, violence against the village residents became more apparent and brutal, and access into and out of BTK became even more difficult.

Such a situation is consistent with the larger state narrative that continues to be propelled about the Baloch in Balochistan. With the ongoing occupation of Balochistan by the Pakistani military, the narrative is that any insurgent protest or action against the state's brutal regime is deemed as terrorism. Over the last decades, thousands of Baloch men have been made to disappear, only to be found dead or mutilated. Dr. Mahrang Baloch, a leading activist for the BYQ constantly faces arrest charges, is denied exit out of the country and is deemed to be an enemy of the state. These narratives trickle down into BTK's operation in Malir as well, especially in the ways it governs its Baloch population. Hafeez Baloch, a member of SIRA, who I mentioned at the beginning of this thesis (and repeatedly elsewhere) was also recently arrested during a protest organized by BYQ. As a member of the local activist scene in Malir, he mentioned that their struggles are intimately tied to the struggles of the larger Baloch population in Balochistan. Although the Baloch in Malir are a distinctive category of what we now call the 'Baloch' ethnicity, their struggles have become merged under the state's ethnic homogenizing efforts, where they attempt to categorize entire ethnicities as one. These contestations give shape to other local ways of unsettling forms of protest and making visible the atrocities of BTK. SIRA, for instance, has been at the forefront of this struggle in Malir.

SIRA, while an activist organization, is also a group that often conducts informal tours of BTK to show people all that has been taken away and apart. It also then shows all that has been added on top of the loss, all that has been mutated and everything that has been repurposed or appropriated. Hafeez Baloch, a resident of Kathore, which is a nearby area tribally (careful use of the term) connected to the cluster of villages affected by BTK's construction, leads this alliance with others, and simultaneously conducts tours of the land upon which is now the vast expanse of Bahria Town. Hafeez is also one of the focal persons who scholars and activists go to for information, advice and to ask for how they can get involved. Along the tours, he brings up instances of his childhood, playing between villages, exploring hills and having the literal and metaphorical expanse of Malir to imagine a future through- all of which has been taken away. He shared with me, for example, sites of what we would now call, desire paths. These are paths that people walked through to make way between villages to meet each other and build community. These are illicit paths, defying urban planning, built over time, often taking decades to slowly etch into the earth as a road map for people walking and motorcycling between villages. These desire paths are all but paved over now by roads that serve cars, tankers, bulldozers and trucks building a network that exacerbates the presence of new build infrastructure.

While tours and observations reveal much about the present and the past, they also reveal something about the future. The yet unseen, but indeed anticipated in planning. Nikhil Anand (2023) argues that "planning and infrastructure construction processes are inherently future

oriented” and that projections are made possible through an extension of time which the built infrastructure represents. However, planning also depends on a deployment of categorical separation between things, like dry and wet, culture and nature, rich and poor, in order to make certain plans possible for certain uses. Spatial and temporal boundaries become fixed in plans projected to do x amount of things in x amount of years. In the case of BTK, while villages that are inside its boundaries have been accorded rights to a boundary wall, which can be seen as some kind of a spatial and temporal relief from displacement, the threat of accumulation still looms on all sides. For the village like HAMG, having no access to electricity, water, schools, firewood, gas, internet, roads, hospitals or any basic facilities, on top of a restricted mobility through gates and fences, all limits the possibilities of a future upon which planning rests. Hence, by meticulously unmaking the village as devoid of basic provisions for life, the spatial expansion planning for a future for Bahria town rests on an (un)futuring of the village. It is in this way that Anand also argues that “urban agencies are empowered in the present by wielding futures” that are made possible by enacting separations, by delineations and differentiations of spaces and times. With over 500 children without access to schools and health facilities in these villages, futures are presently being drawn out as limited, and more land is under anticipatory occupation. Tours thus, make visible the ways in which infrastructures have come to structure futures inside BTK. Since these tours have a temporal quality, reflecting on the past, present and future, they are able to reveal much about the effects of BTK’s expansion on the daily lives village residents. Moreover, these tours also highlight the restrictions and possibilities for future engagement, whether it shapes up as academic research, political resistance or daily interaction. Tours become as such, ways of shaping resistance under occupation.



Figure 12 (Author, 2024) Inside HAMG

Michal Huss (2023), in speaking about resistance through walking tours in Jaffa, shows modes of reclaimed agency for the indigenous Palestinians to tell their own history themselves, rather than have it told by a gentrified narration of the settler colonial Israeli state. Huss shows that by mapping modes of dominance and resistance to it, an interactive narrative between the village and the urban is teased out. In that, a simultaneity is brought forth, sowing the relationship between the displacement of Palestinians and the use of historic Palestinian infrastructure as a site for Israeli gentrification. Hafeez's tours attempt to do a similar thing, where he presents sites of occupation, such as historic graveyards, wells and rivers to exemplify all that has been lost and all that is being appropriated. His tours multiply narrate the story of Malir and its landscape, not as wilderness or wasteland, but as infrastructure through which life was made possible hundreds of years ago until a little more than a decade ago. However, he also highlights the nation state and military capitalism's effects on the structuring of life as it continues to expand. The act of resistance through tours, is often the beginning of a longer chain reaction of actions that are propelled. This thesis is a product of one such tour offered to me by Hafeez Baloch, which triggered a series of visits, interactions, talks, participations and protests over the many months of 2024, and it hopes to serve as a piece in the repertoire of resistance that gives hope to Malir and its residents. The next subsection attempts to open up some of these explorations.



Figure 13 (Author, 2024) Walled graveyard belonging to the HAMG village

IIIb. Legal-Formal

While securitization manifests itself in the forms of barbed wires, enclaves, boundary walls, check points and many other infrastructural interventions in Karachi, it also shows up in the legal-formal negotiations that social actors of the city engage in. In the case of the village residents, the securitization through walling infrastructure becomes a matter of parallel negotiations. While all villages inside BTK are walled, they are not done so for the same reasons or with the same intentions. Within BTK, HAMG was walled because the residents of the village ‘fought a case’ in the supreme court to safeguard their land. The court decided that the ‘not-yet-developed’ land encircling the village will be secured and a wall will be put up, paid for by BTK, in order to safeguard the village from BTK’s continued encroachment of HAMG land. Because of a presumed violence inherent in any interaction with BTK officials, the village residents stated that they feared BTK would defy the court’s ruling and close the dense village core within a wall. This means that they feared BTK would shrink the wall’s parameters that would deprive the village of the little extra land that lies between the village core and the BTK roads. Over the years HAMG itself had already lost over 1800 acres of land to the developer’s violent and illegal occupation, and they were left with a mere 55 acres including the residential village that was not yet paved on by BTK. In order to save the 55 acres of land they decided to build shacks overnight after the court’s ruling, to extend the parameters of the village and to make claims to the land around the village core. Since the land was legally theirs anyhow, in an attempt for added security and claims against land capture for legal evidence, they deployed shacks as material claims to land. The figures below show the distance between the populated core and the wall itself. Within the yellow borders is the populated core of HAMG and the orange border is where the wall stands currently. The orange border was only possible because of the informal building of shacks at a distance from the core shown as pinned locations.



Figure 14 (Author, 2024) Map produced by author, shows density and locations of shacks inside HAMG.



Figure 15 (Author, 2024) Closer aerial look into HAMG.

The agentic use of the infrastructure of shacks and the desire to be walled through legal apparatus suggests a negotiated claim to space that allows us to see the ways in which resistance against occupation emerges. However, the situation is of course not ideal. The village is after all walled from all sides, only to be entered from two small openings and they remain devoid of any municipal provisions like water, gas, electricity or proper connection to roads. And counter-intuitively, the residents of HAMG continue to discursively position themselves as prisoners of BTK, despite calling for the walls themselves. Such a contradiction suggests a need to understand the preservation of livelihood and land within the complex and situated social dynamics of claim-making and emotional relationships to ancestral land.

Much like HAMG, ADG also joined the legal battle to separate their village through the building of walls. However, as opposed to HAMG, the ADG wall allows for a much larger opening that enters a market-like space inside the village, accessible to BTK and vice versa. The images below show, first the very apparent planning structuring of the village and next to it, one of BTK's projects; and secondly, the marketplace inside the village (in blue) represented in the rectangular buildings from an aerial view. Although the two villages are similarly dispossessed of municipal provisions, ADG uses solar panels, for instance, for electricity, bought with some money received after legally selling some of their land, and entered certain legal-economic negotiations with BTK

that allowed them to open up a market place for some cafes, food stalls and shops that cater primarily to the construction workers working for BTK.



Figure 16 (Author, 2024) Map produced by Author, shows comparison between walled ADG village and a BTK neighborhood.



Figure 17 (Author, 2024) Zoomed in version of Figure 16, showing infrastructure inside ADG.

Despite the economic and infrastructural negotiations made by ADG, the claim to the wall remains contested where rights to the wall are symbolically struggled for. According to the court's ruling, the wall and everything inside the wall remains within the jurisdictional domains of the village. This ruling includes the wall itself as the property of the village. However, in my conversations with the village elder, he stated that BTK has made many attempts to assert a claim over the walls by illegally spray-painting stencils of the BTK logo on the outer facade of the walls. This did not sit well with the village residents, and they would engage in erasing the stencils by spray painting over them or erasing the paint altogether. It is important for ADG to assert a claim over the walls because they chose to stay put and wish to maintain their presence against BTK while involved in certain economic negotiations with the developer simultaneously. This scenario shows yet another contradiction concerning the degree to which the village wants to associate with BTK while remaining within it.

Spray painting a logo around the village walls is not an isolated incident. While the walls today are made of concrete and provide a degree of separation, it was not always the case. Before 2019, during the earlier stages of BTK's occupation of Malir, the outer walls of the villages, built with mud-bricks, would sometimes be painted with a red bulls-eye signaling the incoming demolition

of houses (DAWN, 2016). Many villages and houses with a bull's eye spray painted were illegally demolished and the traumatic memories of dispossession remain present. Therefore, BTK's logo, while asserting claim to the wall and by effect the village, also suggests a looming threat of demolition and eviction. Hence, residents of ADG use the practice of negotiating with the developer as a form of quiet resistance that hovers between compliance and antagonism, between holding BTK's hand and simultaneously resisting its symbolic claims. Here, agency, memory and action can be understood within a range of repertoires used to resist constant uncertainty and changing conditions. This case also allows us to see the competing claim-making practices that suggest an understanding of the social and legal-formal production of exclusion and dispossession and resistance against it since the wall ultimately rests on legal foundations and everything that happens in, around and on it are all legally bound matters.

In the context of these two cases, I want to briefly talk about the ways in which practices of 'preservation' are framed and how we can attempt a reading of them. Firstly, this mode of preservation of land needs to be looked at through a complex interplay of how dominant market and legal-formal logics converse with the alternative and diverse practices of land. Gribat and Pizzo (2020) suggest the use of the term 'landed practices' that hint to a certain subjectivization of land with the related risk of de-subjectivization of the actual agents that act on said land. This means that the landed practice of shack-making, for instance, produces a subjective claim over land that is used within legal-formal frameworks such as taking the developer to court and asking for walls to be built. Such an instance needs to be understood within an anti-capitalist struggle by the villages to maintain their non-capitalist social and spatial relations and to not become embedded within the larger scheme of BTK. Since the building of the wall, BTK has used formal channels, as opposed to the informal violence during the larger occupation in former years (see previous sections), to offer a buy-out of the entire village. However, the village residents' continuous rejection of the offers suggests something about the deeper desires and emotional connections that compel them to stay.

Secondly, considering the contradiction of wanting to keep the village, the desire to be walled off, and the consequent subjection to the colloquial 'imprisonment' and potential violence emerging from symbols, it is important to look at the nature of 'violence' as a "composite and embedded strategy of claim-making" (Haar, Leeuwen & Vries, 2020, pg. 237). This responds to Paul Richard's suggestion (2005) that violence needs to be brought back into the realm of the social, suggesting largely that violence needs to also be looked at as a social and political tool through which people defend and stake their claims over land. Therefore, in a version of the story where walling can be seen as self-inflicted imprisonment, the violence of walls is used by villagers to keep alive the domain of their society. In conversation with a legal-formal and capitalist push towards the occupation of village land in Malir, the heterogeneously assembled repertoires of legal, political, social and infrastructural resources come into play in strategies that people often use to defend their right to stay put. Such a reading of these instances allows us to see how resistance then is not only a response, but a process and practice embedded in certain material and emotional relationships to land, and it operates through alignments and constant adjustments between legal-formal and social frameworks. Resistance, moreover, in context specific cases like inside BTK can also then be legally subversive while being subjectively produced.

IIIc. Hole-in-the-Wall Informality and Everyday Resistance

Informality, as many scholars have pointed out, is not entirely outside the domains of the formal, rather it is a relational designation constructed by formal institutions to dispel certain forms of social, economic and political life (Roy 2005; Yiftachel 2009). Everyday practices that have long sustained non-capitalist modes of life, suddenly become informal under the state's neoliberalization efforts. Consequently, any practice that defies the established order of formal things automatically becomes informal, and under the grip of neoliberal constitutions, often illegal. Nonetheless, these practices remain present and continue to show up in various ways that constantly negotiate their terms between formal and informal ways of being, including the risks involved. Here I want to talk about some instances of village residents making holes in the BTK constructed walls as infrastructural negotiations against formally designated territorial occupation and against dispossession highlighting the porosity of walling. Simultaneously, these acts show up in miscellaneous actions that inform everyday life.

During one of my visits inside BTK, I came across a boy with a stick in his hand, standing on a sidewalk. I was in a car, and I stopped by where he was to see what was going on. Next to the sidewalk was a soft slope downwards, leading to the boundary wall of BTK. The area is a little hilly, so the boundary wall goes up and down and is not leveled. The boy had a stick in his hand because he had somehow managed to get a herd of goats inside BTK, through the boundary wall, despite it being illegal to herd goats inside the compound. While there are villages walled inside BTK, many villages lie immediately outside the wall whose access to pasturing land has been severed. I asked him how he managed to bring the herd in and why? He said, "Well, we made a little hole through the wall just big enough for me and the goats to come through one at a time. BTK is so big they don't always notice these punctures, and there is some grass here that our goats like to graze on, as they have done for a very long time." Hearing this I prompted the question of fines for herding goats around here to which he responded, "yes, the fine is 20,000 rupees per goat but I hope the guard doesn't come to this side." His village was located right outside the boundary wall of Bahria Town. Everyday acts of herding goats become imbricated with urban logic and rules. The urban-formal logic being that of regulation, of fines and of a commodification of land that was formerly and historically always used for goat herding purposes. However, at the same time, the making of a hole, and the trespassing through the wall also has something to say about urban informal modes of taking matters in your own hands. While I don't want to reduce this account to narratives of agency, urbanity and informality entirely, I also find it important to note that there was a different sense of knowing how land relationships work between the boy's interaction with what is now BTK's land. Moreover, the fact that the boy was aware of the risks involved speaks to the ways in which information around securitization and violence spills over across the boundary wall. Goat herding and grazing is a normal part of life for residents of Malir's farming villages, and BTK's construction is an obstruction of that practice. While BTK's formal infrastructural arrangement would stake a claim to the land that they have developed, the long-standing pasturing and grazing areas for the village livestock was never accommodated for, and hence they took matters into their own hands, reflected in the building of a hole. This site of the hole can thus be read as the space of porosity and the practices enabling that porosity speak to the negotiation between what is constructed as formal and informal, between the space of law and unlawfulness, but also between violence and dispossessed people. It also becomes as such, a strategy of survival.



Figure 18 (Author, 2024) View of BTK across the horizon, from inside HAMG.

At yet another instance, driving within BTK, I came across a village wall with a small opening that had a loose metal door attached on what looked like a broken part of the wall. Beyond this door was a small stall selling cigarettes, snacks and some drinks. I was now inside DGG. When I spoke to the vendor about how he goes around negotiating the wall, he mentioned that unlike HAMG and ADG, DGG had no say in whether a wall should be built at all. From his account,

“the wall emerged out of nowhere and shut us out of all road access. How do we continue to do the things we did before? Naturally, I had to build a hole here to continue selling so I can make some money since BTK took all our farming land anyway” (DGG Interview 1 2024)

I asked if it was illegal, under BTK’s rules, to build a hole here and whether he was aware of any risks involved for him, as a seller. He responded saying,

“there’s probably a risk, but then the risk is always present! They did not ask us when they built the wall so why should I ask them for permission to take down part of the wall to continue my business. They have bigger things to worry about than me or this small gate. I close the gate at night anyway so they don’t have a way to enter.” (DGG Interview 1 2024)

During the time of our conversation when he began speaking of the violence of BTK, a customer arrived, and the vendor signaled to me in Sindhi to keep quiet about critical talk while he dealt with the customer. The customer was a construction worker from Punjab. The vendor told me that “if they hear us bad mouthing BTK, we could get in serious trouble.” He later went on to mention that:

“of course, BTK knows that I have made a hole in this wall to sell things, but most of my customers are construction workers so they won’t bother me. This is a negotiation I have to make in order to make some money to feed my own family inside the village.” (DGG Interview 1 2024)

This interaction exemplifies the relational qualities of claim making over landed practices. The negotiations this vendor has had to make, albeit at a smaller more individual scale, shows us how informal practices are read under occupation. He interacts with construction workers from Punjab and KPK every day and so, has to organize his speech and actions around his interactions. Here, we see that resistance is something that is characterized by multiple interactions at multiple scales across multiple ethnic and class lines. The construction worker is no more secure in his job than the vendor, but given the prevailing ethnic prejudices present in the country and the allusion to a fear of persecution, if the construction worker tells on the vendor to BTK admin, produces in this one site, an example out of the what some scholars have called a policing state (Low 2004). In this brief encounter, the positionality of the construction worker and the vendor made visible the emergent ethnic dynamics that BTK has been able to engender in Malir. Nonetheless, a careful and constant recalibration, of what is said and what is not in the public and in front of whom, by actors is required for certain kinds of tensions to remain present that allow for their own livelihoods. Informality can here then be seen as a tool that is used by either actor, the state, BTK, the construction worker and the vendor, to keep alive the tense dynamics of oppression, survival and resistance. Informality, therefore, provides a useful analytical tool to make apparent the blurriness of legal and illegal practices and claims, along with choices and affordances that enable certain kinds of legitimacies to hold.

According to Ali Nobil Ahmed (2022 p. 48), speaking through the case of Southern Punjab, “in all of Pakistan’s peripheries, infrastructure-led development is experienced and contested through ethnicity, language, and notions of place structured by uneven development.” Because of rapid development taking place in Malir, the villages and their residents have similarly come to experience and contest uneven development through language, place and ethnicity as well. BTK’s arrival into Malir demands a rearrangement of social and political interactions because the developer brings with itself not only infrastructure and capital but also an expansive security and construction apparatus. The processes of securitization and construction both have become daily confrontations for the village residents. This means that while formal and informal ways of structuring resistance are important to analyze, the everyday forms of quiet resistance shape another domain of contestation, where life itself becomes insurgent.

As I have discussed in earlier sections (See section 5.II) security and mobility are regularly administered and have become ordinary features of life in Malir, specifically concerning new gated housing communities. These new infrastructures of mobility and securitization therefore, inform social life and local responses. Everyday interactions with these infrastructures are mobilized to make their presence visible and dictate how people are governed inside. These infrastructures, however, are also porous features of BTK’s development. They are imperfect, and therefore, present possibilities for resistance.

When I stepped inside DGG, the first space I came across was a little playground. I was looking for someone to talk to, but couldn’t find anyone. Some children came towards me and I asked them if I am in the right place, if this village was in fact DGG. They told me to go away, this is not

DGG. They ran away with sticks in their hands, repeating the phrase, “go away, this is not DGG”. I got the hint that perhaps they don’t want to be identified. It was only through my interaction with the vendor that it was confirmed that the village was indeed DGG. However, my interaction with the children propelled me to ask the vendor another question, why did they want to not claim that this was their village? And he responded:

“It is probably because their elders have told them to not interact with anyone who comes in a car, asking if this is DGG. Telling strangers that this area is not the village is a way for them to keep it safe from the vandals who often come to look for trouble. These vandals often come to steal our cows, break into our homes and vandalize other property. The children see that of course. So, the only way that the children have developed to keep their village secure, is by not letting it be known that this is in fact DGG. This way, when someone new comes, they have to circle around and ask a bunch of times, so much so that they get tired and leave” (DGG Interview 1 2024)

I had of course been reminded constantly of the sensitivity of doing research in a setting like BTK, with vulnerable populations residing still under corporate regimes, but until this moment, I had not witnessed the use of language and gangs of children for the purposes of resistance. This is another instance, much like the one I explored above, where resistance against BTK is structured through what we would call strategies of survival. Not letting the name of the village to be disclosed or where it is located is indeed a strategy of survival. However, I refrain from the use of that term too often because it tends to connote a removal of agency to stake claims. I refer to some of these acts, as acts of resistance, rather than strategies of survival in order to highlight their political qualities.

These acts of resistance show up in other ways as well. For instance, village residents in ADG pooling money to buy solar panels because they have been denied access to electricity, or one resident of HAMG picking up shifts as a water tanker driver to source water for the village because their wells have been dried up because of BTK’s 1000 ft boring project to water its golf course. These instances show that there is a deeper willingness in the village residents to remain grounded in their land, next to their kin. These actions constitute everyday life as it is presently changing across the district and it will likely be the case for the future. The very fabric with which their existence is mobilized in everyday ways, highlights the affective relationship that exists connected to land. However, the ways in which the village residents are stigmatized, oppressed and marginalized also highlights the racial logics of BTK’s occupation that they have to constantly navigate and circumvent. It is because of this prevailing logic of operation under which the villages find themselves moving that I urge a reading of their survival as resistance.

6. Conclusion

This thesis investigates the violent and racialized urban transformation unfolding in Karachi’s Malir district through the case of Bahria Town Karachi (BTK). Centered on three villages: HAMG, ADG, and DGG, now walled within the boundaries of a mega real estate enclave, the research examined how processes of accumulation by dispossession (ABD) manifest in spatial, political, and racial terms, and how local residents resist these enclosures in multiple, situated ways. Drawing on 10 months of ethnographic fieldwork, the study contributes to a growing literature on the urbanization of the Global South by highlighting the complex, uneven, and often contradictory dynamics of dispossession and resistance. Through an investigation of BTK and village lives

inside it, this thesis furthers broader arguments about the contemporary nature of ABD and how processes of racialization and resistance are central to its functioning. BTK, as this thesis shows, is not merely a real estate development but a racial and spatial project of neoliberalism and militarized state-corporate power. Its rise in Malir is inseparable from Pakistan's broader turn toward economic liberalization in the early 2000s, where land became a key site for capital accumulation. The history of Malir's transformation, as contextualized in Chapter 4, is deeply entangled with colonial land regimes and military rule, revealing continuities in how state and non-state actors have mobilized land for accumulation over time. BTK's expansion into Malir, aided by state facilitation and enabled by the disempowerment of indigenous landholders, reflects what scholars have called the political organization of dispossession (Levien, 2013). The conceptual framework laid out in Chapter 2 builds on David Harvey's theory of ABD, but also critically engages its limitations. As Levien (2013) and others argue, dispossession is not merely a functional response to capital's crises but a politically mediated act, often orchestrated through bureaucratic and militaristic structures. As I attempt to draw out in this thesis, in the Pakistani context, the military is not peripheral but central to these processes. The thesis locates BTK within a militarized regime of accumulation where dispossession serves the political and material interests of military, bureaucratic, and corporate elites who use ethnic differences within their colonial workings to propel racial categorizations for capital accumulation.

Beyond economic logics, the thesis has paid close attention to the racial and ethnic dimensions of dispossession. Drawing from theorizations of racial capitalism, it has shown how the Baloch and Sindhi populations of Malir have historically been racialized through colonial classifications and postcolonial governance structures. The walling of villages, as discussed in Chapter 5, is not just a matter of infrastructure or urban planning, it is also a socio-spatial technology of exclusion. These walls simultaneously contain, isolate, and criminalize local populations, rendering them invisible within Karachi's vision of modernity. The use of the word "imprisonment" by residents testifies to their politically conscious alignment with global injustices and is deeply expressive of their lived experiences. So, it is not only that BTK finds itself securing its own land by enclosing the villages within an extensive boundary wall, it is also the villagers that fight to make the boundary walls possible in order to stop BTK from further taking over their land. In this way, the wall becomes a force of oppression, security and resistance. According to one matriarch of a Gabol household, 'the boundary walls imprison us within, but they keep BTK out' (Interview CITE). Because the village residents pass through the wall on a regular basis, or try to do so, they confront the wall at different positions. They experience the wall from the position of a laborer, that is, from working inside BTK but outside the village. They then confront the wall as a resident of the village, attempting to hike down the unpaved road that leads to the opening of the wall to allow them to enter the village. In that, they experience approaching the wall, almost as if approaching imprisonment and a different world. Then, finally, they are inside, the other side of the wall confronts them as no longer being within Bahria Town. Following Brighenti & Karrholm (2019), walls are "mediators" of social exchange, enabling certain territorializations and disabling others. The function of walling and the practice of breaking a wall for herding or for sustaining a small business reflects how certain logics of urbanization make the consequences of walling palpable and give shape to the interactions different communities have with the walls around them. These arguments can provide a way of thinking about not just the anthropology of how the village and the villager is being made and unmade through these walls, but also how walls themselves provide

mediation to be made and unmade, therefore making the wall, something of a malleable feature of urban spaces.

Chapter 5 also presented an account of how dispossession operates through a spectrum of violence, from forced land acquisition and bureaucratic obfuscation to militarized security and everyday surveillance. Residents of the villages recounted episodes of legal ambiguity, military-backed eviction, and spatial marginalization. But the thesis also foregrounds the contradictory meanings of the walls: while some residents fought to build them as protection from further encroachment, others saw them as symbols of forced enclosure. This ambivalence illustrates the heterogeneous nature of dispossession, shaped by differing experiences, positionalities, and historical memory. Through a study of a localized experience of ABD, this thesis shows that primitive accumulation is a continuous process, to confirm Harvey's argument, and that it preys on historical and socio-cultural systems to further itself. What can be understood then, is that in order to study processes of urbanization in the global south, and to many extents in the north as well, a deeper engagement with situated histories and processes is important.

Resistance, as detailed in the latter half of Chapter 5, is equally heterogeneous. Legal action, informal survival tactics, protest tours, and alliances with rights-based organizations such as SIRA and BYC illustrate a complex repertoire of responses. While some strategies are formal and visible, such as court cases, public campaigns, others are every day and quiet, such as maintaining informal mobility through broken gates and walls and resisting enclosure through spatial practices. These forms of resistance are not necessarily coherent or unified, but they are persistent and relational, emerging from within the very structures of enclosure. The methodological approach of this thesis, grounded in urban ethnography and subaltern geopolitics, has enabled a reading of BTK not from the abstract vantage of policy or capital but from the ground, from within the walled villages themselves. The ethnographic encounters, long-form interviews, and visual-spatial mapping all sought to render visible the lives and struggles of those rendered invisible by dominant narratives of development. By letting participants guide the research questions and field routes, the study emphasized the epistemic value of those most affected by dispossession.

This thesis does not claim to provide a total account of BTK or Malir. As acknowledged in Chapter 3, the limitations of access, language, and time restrict the scope of what can be known. However, by situating the three case villages within broader historical and conceptual frameworks, the study offers an indicative portrait of contemporary urbanization in Karachi. It shows how processes of ABD, racial capitalism, and militarized development converge in the form of mega housing projects like BTK and how these are met with differentiated but determined acts of resistance.

In closing, this thesis argues that Karachi's urban future, as projected through BTK and similar developments, is premised on dispossession, enclosure, and racialisation. Yet, within this violent restructuring, there remain spaces of refusal, negotiation, and survival. The walled villages are not only sites of loss but also of life, memory, and struggle. Understanding their present and futures requires us to decenter celebratory narratives of development and attend instead to the material, political, and affective geographies of those who live through its underside. Broadly contributing to literature on ABD and racial capitalism in the Global South, this thesis underscores the need to pay attention to the various apparent and relational logics of capitalism whereby dispossession, racialization and resistance become visible indicators of its claims on processes of urbanization.

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Appendix

Sample Interview Questions (This is one sample from an interview- only questions are noted below. This is to show the thematic questioning and conversation that happened between the author and resident of ADG):

Name of village:

Gender:

Age:

Ethnicity: Baloch/Sindhi/other:

Family/household size (if any):

Occupation:

Date:

Temperature:

Preliminary observations from Interviewer:

How long have you/your family lived in this village?

How many people, according to you, live in this village?

Did anyone carry out a census?

As opposed to other villages, where the boundary wall encapsulates the entire village, the wall for your village is not totally enclosing. It stops here with some construction happening. These big shops being constructed, are they Bahria Town's property or that of the village?

What, if any, is the interaction like between the businesses of the village and residents/users of Bahria Town?

Who erected these boundary walls?

What are people's perceptions of land beyond the boundaries?

How much land do you own within these boundaries now?

You are the feudal elder of the village. What do you do for work?

What about the people who live in the village? What do they do?

Where does the farming take place?

Did Bahria town provide any form of compensation for land that was taken?

When was this fenced boundary wall erected?

Was the wall erected with the consent of the village residents or not?

Do you think you will ever get this security as long as Bahria Town is here?

What is road access like? It appears that there is an unpaved/mud road connection between Bahria Town's roads and the village.

How are the conditions of this village different or similar to others inside Bahria Town?

Do some people from the village work inside or for Bahria Town? What do you think is also the gendered aspect of employment or work?

Have there been any threats or harassment by the police? And what has that interaction been like?

As you cross one boundary wall, of the village first, and then Bahria Town's, to get onto the highway enroute to the city center of Karachi, how are village and human relationships/lives affected by them, these crossings, the walls, and boundaries?

What is your, and the villagers' relationship like with the city center of Karachi?

How did the news of Bahria Town arrive here?

What kind of offer did they make?

Bahria Town must have given continuing offers to buy up the whole village? Who comes and makes these offers, if any?

When you were younger, what was life like? Before the walls, before the paved roads, and before Bahria Town?

What about the children here? How is it different to live here as a child now, as opposed to when you were a child?

Overall, what do you think has happened to the living conditions of people in the village?

What are your thoughts and sentiments about the protest of 2021?

Are you aware of Hafeez Baloch and the Sindhi Indigenous Rights Alliance?

What do you think is the future of children here?

How have temperatures changed between your childhood and now?

The Bahria Town stamp that we see on the village walls, when did that happen?