

8 minute Presentation:

Introduction and Background:

My name is Hassan and my research question is: How to improve governance in Karachi.

A bit of background on bad governance, we're all quite aware of the dismal state of affairs in our city, mired with all sorts of inefficiencies. Therefore the question of improving governance is concerned with all aspects of city management that are currently not on par, that is to say to try and understand how to improve it, we must first understand what is the cause of bad governance in our city.

The causes are numerous, like, negligence, corruption, mismanagement, lack of funds and oversaturation of organizations that are 'responsible' for maintaining the city. I cannot talk about all of these, so in this presentation I'd just like to focus on the role of municipal organizations that are responsible for Karachi, and how and why they might be failing at their jobs. I'll try to go in depth about other topics in the final report.

The core issue here is that there are too many organizations, the city is oversaturated with these which creates a lot of confusion on who is responsible for what and who is to blame for the problems, there is the mayoral KMC, then there are numerous cantonment board jurisdictions and a lot of provincial government offices that are responsible for important tasks like water/waste management which should normally be devolved to the local administration, and that's before mentioning the private organizations responsible for power. I.e K-electric.

The problem with so many organizations apart from structural challenges like budget, is the fact that none of them are truly empowered, they all operate in their own little vacuums and with the lack of a central body governing them all it leads to all sorts of inefficiencies and challenges and it creates a sort of mis-coordination in the city, like no-one truly knows what's going on with regards to development, and there is no plan when it comes to decisions and outcomes. For example, they will dig up a six lane highway to make a bus corridor, with no thoughts on how it would impact the traffic there, and how it's lead to more traffic congestion in a city that's already plagued with bad traffic.

That's not to mention that the bus route is extremely limited, like it leads nowhere. Personally I've never met anyone who's used the green bus but maybe that's because my circle is limited. The lack of adequate public transport is a structural issue caused by the mismanagement when it comes to administration.

A World Bank Study on this revealed that Karachi was 'mismanaged' by 18 public works organizations all responsible for different niches with no real central command in place to which these organizations report to, this coupled with a very weak mayoral corporation that does not even have the jurisdiction to pick up garbage in the city (provincial government retains administrative control of garbage collection), as a result due to this lack in authority, all other public works orgs are running a governance system parallel to each other with little coordination, which leads to all sorts of issues and also human rights abuses and the failures of government to protect vulnerable groups which leads into my next topic.

which is a research paper on is Lyari Expressway, focusing on how weak local governments fail to protect their people's interest because they are depending on external funding/planning when it comes to development projects. The main focus of this paper is the circumstances at the time of construction and how weak governance lead to thousands of people being uprooted from their homes and schools when the expressway was built, due to mostly informal encroachments/settlements, they were not compensated and their homes were bulldozed with negotiations, which is a failure of the government who failed to consider better alternatives or atleast provide fair compensation to affected communities.

So concluding, as I started with the idea of understanding the core issue before we can start thinking of solutions, Well now I feel theres a bit of understanding regarding how lack of a coherent management apparatus leads to all sorts of problems.

The only concrete solution is a strong local government structure, with centralized control for example with the KMC to decide on how the city functions, and the dissolution of core powers like waste management, water and power supply back to the city instead of with the province, and consolidation of other public work bodies like the cantonment baords into less organization to better the efficiency of the whole system. So in essence, the analogy of too many cooks in the kitchen, what we require is less cooks.

To make this happen, the policial stakeholders in the city should work together to solve the problems, instead of blaming each other, as in the past the federal and provincial governments blamed each other and were unwilling to solve the problems due to which the people suffer, so the political actors must devise a way to make the strong local government which can look after the city.

Thats about it, Thanks.

Appendix:

Karachi Metropolitan Corporation
6 District Municipal Corporations (DMCs)
Karachi Development Authority
Etc etc