

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND EMPOWERMENT IN HORIZONTAL
GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS: CASE STUDY OF KARACHI BACHAO TEHREEK

by

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Thesis

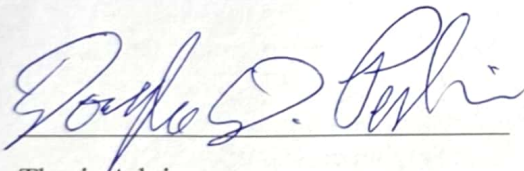
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Glossary:

AWP: Awami Workers Party

JAC: Joint Action Committee

KBT: Karachi Bachao Tehreek

KCR: Karachi Circular Railway

KUL: Karachi Urban Lab

Nala: A watercourse, a ravine

Mutasireen: Those that are directly affected by demolitions and evictions

SBT: Sindh Bachao Tehreek

TTRC: Technical Training Resource Centre

WDF: Women's Democratic Forum

WhatsApp: A free cross-platform instant messaging application

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Contrary to what we would like to believe, there is no such thing as a structureless group. Any group of people of whatever nature that comes together for any length of time for any purpose will inevitably structure itself in some fashion” (Freeman, 1972)

“After God, we have KBT (Karachi Bachao Tehreek). Our mothers and sisters are without roof and cover. The bulldozer comes at 6am and our house is destroyed with all our belongings inside – and when we raise our voices we are taken to jail... They should just kill us and get it over with – we have lost countless people, including brothers and children. Government pays 50000 rupees (USD 180) for the death of an 8-year-old child. Is that the value of a child who drowns and dies to their parents? Tell me – who do we ask for justice from? God has given us this KBT, we are indebted to it until our death. If KBT was not there, we would not have succeeded in our mission. KBT gave us guidance, KBT told us how to do things, for mutasireen to mobilize for their rights, they stood with us...” (Mehtab talking about the demolition of her house and her opinion of KBT)

In August 2020, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered the government to clear ‘encroachment’ around the city nalas (waterways), which could result in displacement of more than 96,000 people (Anwar et al., 2021). In March 2021, I was contacted by a friend who was working with Karachi Bachao Tehreek (KBT), and I joined their efforts to resist the demolitions. We conducted research to counter government narrative of framing the residents as ‘illegal encroachers. The residents of the settlement were largely lower class, with low socio-economic status. But what struck me about KBT was its horizontal approach, with the focus being on collective decision making and discussions with the residents through community meetings. The

middle-class activists centered the lower class affectees (mutasireen), rather than themselves. Through this collective power, it felt like we might be able to resist the demolitions.

After one of the meetings, I went back to my home, far away from the settlement in danger and slept peacefully. When I woke up, I found out that the government took sudden action and razed many houses to the ground in the early morning hours. The residents tried to resist but could not, and some of them were even arrested. The other members of KBT, the middle-class allies, were not there with the residents at this crucial hour. How can a social movement be horizontal with these power differentials, with different stakes in the movement, and with grassroots members looking up to their more privileged allies for leadership and support?

Social movements are comprised of a number of people, and those people generally embody various different identities. This results in power differentials within the members. A person might enjoy more power in the organization through their socio-economic status, their gender, their race, their age and seniority, or their charisma. Grassroots movements, a form of social movements, are characterized by involvement of the people impacted by the issue itself – the grassroots level of community. However, invariably, movements are faced with challenges of organizational structure and power relations; I avoided any personal harm despite being a member of KBT, while the grassroots community lost their homes. Moreover, the grassroots community may also rely on their middle-class allies for decision making and strategy. How can a social movement maintain a horizontal structure with these differences, and how can it empower the grassroots community – the mutasireen themselves?

While there has been a rise in discourse on grassroots organizing and participation in the last few decades (Apostolopoulou et al., 2022; Cornwall, 2008; Fuentes, 2012), some scholars

still suggest that they are largely ignored in literature (Chowdhary, 2021). The situation becomes more bleak moving into global literature, specifically of Pakistan, where there is a dearth of discourse and research on grassroots social movements.

Literature with in-depth case studies of the structure and empowerment of horizontal grassroots social movements organizations is even more scarce, as there is very little research that delves into how grassroots organization or movements function in Pakistan. There is some literature that deals with the latter question in other and global contexts, providing theory and analysis of the structure of such organizations (Christens et al., 2021; Zapata Campos et al., 2022).

To address the gap in literature my thesis will focus on Karachi Bachao Tehreek (KBT), a grassroots movement that has been instrumental in resisting evictions and providing rehabilitation to affectees of state sponsored demolitions. Of the little research there is regarding KBT, it mostly centers around the issue of demolitions, legality of informal settlements, and the documentation of what has happened (Anwar et al., 2021; Mubashir, 2023). There is no discussion on the methods and challenges of the resistance effort mounted by KBT, and to explore the lessons KBT can provide to other grassroots social movements.

In my literature review, I will first define grassroots, and then I will provide some frameworks to analyze social movements and the literature around those frameworks. These frameworks are related to organizational structure, empowerment and power. After that, I will introduce my research questions and the methodology. Within that section, I will also provide situate the context of the study by providing background information about KBT and the issue of demolitions and displacement.

Then I will present my approach to data analysis followed by the findings section. The findings. After that, the important findings are presented again in the discussion section, examining it with respect to how it relates to existing literature and what are its implications for future research. I also discuss some strengths and limitations of the current study before providing a final conclusion to the thesis.

This thesis will not only enrich Pakistani literature, but also global literature on organizational structure of grassroots social movements, including analysis of organizational empowerment within and the challenges faced by grassroots social movements.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Defining Grassroots:

Grassroots refers to the basic building block of a society (Uphoff, 1993). Uphoff defines grassroots organizations as “any and all organizations at the group, community or locality level, though usually one is referring to membership or voluntary organizations” (p. 609). Another theorist suggests that grassroots organizations reflect the voices of those that are affected by an issue, and they are responsive to and largely led by those from that constituency (McCambridge, 2008). In comparison to other organizations, grassroots organizations are more grounded and embedded (Chowdhury et al., 2021). Grassroots movements generally have bottom-up decision making and are generally more spontaneous than traditional structures (Ricee, 2020).

However, many NGOs and donor led top-down organizations also often co-opt the term grassroots when describing their projects. Given the ambiguity around the term grassroots being used to describe external organizations, for the purpose of my research I will only be focusing on organizations and local member groups that are dedicated to the improvement of their own communities (Fisher, 1996, p. 60). Another key point to address is the overlap between community organizing and grassroots movements.

Community Organizing is defined as “a process through which people impacted by common concerns work together to build the social power necessary to achieve a series of partial solutions to those concerns” (Speer & Christens, 2015, p. 222). The definition overlaps significantly with that of grassroots organization, due to the fact that both hold the people impacted by an issue at their center. They both complement each other so well that Christens et al. (2021) stress on the importance of grassroots community organizing. While grassroots and community organizing may look similar, there are a few major differences I would like to point

out for our purposes moving forward. The goal of community organizing is to build and exercise power (Christens et al., 2021). By contrast, grassroots organizations do not necessarily have to have that same goal. Community organizing is more relational and focused on leadership development (Kirshner et al., 2021), while grassroots organizations are drawn together by a problem or an issue (Chowdhury et al, 2021).

Despite these differences, there is lack of research analyzing the relationship and parallels between community organizing and grassroots social movements. Are there fixed boundaries between the two? Can there be evolution from one to the other, or can an organization be a blend of both? Community organizing has to include grassroots, but grassroots do not necessarily need to follow the community organizing path. However, I see community organizing as an integral part of a grassroots social movements, especially for a grassroots resistance and activism movement such as KBT. Through this research, I hope to understand the relationship between community organizing and grassroots organizing social movements.

Frameworks and Themes:

Organizational Structure – Horizontalism,

Formalization and Incompleteness:

Traditional organizational research, specifically in the domain of resource mobilization theory, emphasized the survival of social movements on administrative structure and leadership (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Some scholars, such as Gamson, also argued that more centralized and bureaucratic groups were ones that were generally more successful (Giugni, 1998).

However, there are also other recent social movements that exhibit leaderless and horizontal features, such as Arab Spring, Occupy Movement and Black Lives Matter. Interest and research on these movements is growing (Milkman, 2017; Rey, 2016; Western, 2014). These

organizations generally focus on building consensus and participatory democracy, where decisions are made together through meaningful discussions (Heath, 2013). In the case of occupy movement, formal structures were seen with suspicion (Milkman, 2017).

After the end of Occupy Movement, Rojek (2017) suggested that the movement lacked long term significance due to lack of structural attributes and leadership capabilities.

This is in line with the critique of structurelessness by Jo Freeman (1972), where she argues that structurelessness becomes a way of masking power and excluding people without formally addressing these issues. Milkman (2017) and Heath (2013) mention internal challenges and issues within the Occupy Movement that are in line with Freeman's critique, about concentration of leadership/power among white male members and of issues faced by minority groups that went unaddressed. Milkman (2017) uplifts the idea of "leaderful" movements, where leadership is seen as collective by arguing that analysis should focus on how leadership is produced and the process of leading in horizontal movements.

Research suggests that social movement organizations often shift from being informal to increasingly being formal and bureaucratic (Caniglia and Carmin, 2005). This is often because goal-oriented efforts are replaced by activities dedicated to organizational survival. Caniglia and Carmin (2005) provide some insights between the effects of formalization, where centralized decision making facilitates rapid mobilization by reducing conflict and ambiguity. However, informal social movements are able to mobilize and adapt quickly, and they can easily engage in more disruptive actions (Caniglia and Carmin, 2005, p. 203). Furthermore, less formalized organizations are managed by mostly volunteers and have fewer policies and procedures. In a formalized organization, there is clear division of labor and routinized tasks. Often the challenge for a social movement organization is to find the proper balance between these two spectrums.

Another related theme is of incompleteness as articulated by Zapata Campos et al. (2022). The authors talk about incompleteness of structure not as a flaw, but as a design feature that allows the organization to remain flexible, which is a powerful strategy to adapt to resource poor and ever-changing environments. Zapata Campos et al. (2022) discuss how resident associations and grassroots organizations make use of incompleteness to benefit from informal networks and connections, while maintaining fluid membership and avoiding excluding members by making statements about eligibility and status.

Karachi Bachao Tehreek is an ideologically leaderless, horizontal and non-hierarchical organization. Using these frameworks in this section will allow us to explore how grassroots social movements navigate the challenges pertaining to practicing these ideals.

Organizational Empowerment:

The term empowerment has often been used casually without clear definitions, becoming popularized and diluted (Christens, 2019; Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). The concept of empowerment has also been criticized for being too individualistic (Reiger, 2013).

Disproportionate attention to individuals and psychological processes leads to empowerment being reduced to a feeling, rather than a real change in power (Christens, 2019). Therefore, I will be using the concept of empowerment as defined in community psychology by Rappaport.

Rappaport (1987) defined empowerment as “a process by which people, organizations, and communities gain control over their affairs” (p. 122).

Building up on that definition, Maton (2008) described empowerment as “a group-based, participatory, developmental process through which marginalized or oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and basic rights, and achieve important life goals and reduced societal marginalization” (p. 5).

The concept of organizational empowerment is an extension of that definition and can be understood as the organizational processes through which people gain become empowered. Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) defined organizational empowerment as "organizational efforts that generate psychological empowerment among members and organizational effectiveness needed for goal achievement" (p. 130).

Table 1 shows internal aspects of organizational empowerment, as seen in Christens (2019). The column of processes shows activities that relate to organizational empowerment, and those will form the basis of our discussion.

Scholars divide organization empowerment into two broad categories that need to be evaluated separately: processes and outcomes (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). For the purposes of our research, we will be focusing on the processes of organizational empowerment, particularly the organizational processes that facilitate empowerment. As such, my main focus will be on the first column of the table – the processes of organizational empowerment.

Table 1: Internal Aspects of Organizational Empowerment - Processes and Outcomes

| Processes | | Process (Intermediate) Outcomes |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Social Support • Incentive Management | → | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational viability • Resource identification • Sense of community |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity Role Structure | → | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underpopulated settings |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subgroup Linkages | → | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-empowered subgroups |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group-based belief system | → | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolved ideological conflict |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open communication and learning practices | → | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of learning and development |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices to promote internal and external system alignment | → | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems thinking capacity and pursuit of systems change |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of power | → | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic action and efforts to shift dominant narratives |

Source: (Christens, 2019)

Research has found empowering settings and processes to be a useful tool to analyze collective action in social movements. Fedi et al. (2009) analyzed the protest movement against the construction of a high-speed railroad in Italy due to its high levels of citizen participation, and found it to be an empowering movement. The movement exhibited all characteristics of empowering organizational settings. There was a group belief on strengths based perspective and collective good. Leadership was defined as loosely structured, but inspirational and shared. There were also high levels of opportunity roles that members could play and contribute in. Altogether, the movement led to increased awareness and empowerment among members.

Lastly, empowerment can also be influenced by external environmental factors, but I will only be focusing on the internal organizational component which deals with internal structure and functioning of organizations (Christens, 2019).

Power

Power is commonly understood as authority and force, but it is more complex than that and has multiple layers. Lukes (1974) gives a generic definition of power as the ability of one party to make another act in a way contrary to its own interests. This can be through coercive or non-coercive means. According to Lukes (1974), there are three faces of political power. These faces have also been applied to understand community power (Christens, 2019), and it must be noted that my analysis of power largely draws from the framework provided by Christens (2019). The first face of power is the most easily recognizable and deals with the concern of who has the most influence in achieving their desired outcomes. It is concerned with who gets to make decisions, who wins and who loses in publicly visible disputes.

The second face of power is concerned with what does not occur, with gatekeeping in agenda setting (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). This can be seen in actors and institutions

gatekeeping to preserve the status quo, in people avoiding topics for fear of backlash, and institutions preventing discourse on contested issues. An example of this face of power is when Salamon and Van Evera's (1973) study of Black voter turnout showed that fear and discrimination were limiting participation rather than apathy. In an organizational setting, this could be seen through who gets to decide the agenda of discussion and who is able to participate. Furthermore, it can also operate by denying access to people by having discussions and meetings in a place or time that is inaccessible to a group of people.

The third face of power is the most invisible and can be described as the way power shapes ideology. It is rooted in people's worldviews through socialization, where a group may enjoy power and domination over another group not just through political arrangements but also through cultural and ideological lens that sustain and justify this domination (Lukes 1974). Gaventa (1980) suggested that this dimension can be observed in through two ways. The first is the internalization and acceptance of the status quo through a sense of powerlessness. The second is related to the shaping of thought processes through narrativization and framing.

This dimension of power can also be seen in Foucault's conceptualization of power as discursive, which defines what is acceptable and normal, and what is deviant (Foucault, 1991). Through organizing, we can resist and develop our own power, as organizations have been identified as a source of power (Speer, 2008; Speer et al., 2020). As such, KBT is creating community power. Besides the concept of political power provided by Lukes (1974), definitions of community power have also expanded separately. One overarching definition of community power is given below,

“The ability of communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set

agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions, and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision makers that change systems and advance [equitable outcomes].” (Pastor et al., 2020, p. 29)

Kezar (2011) conducted research on challenges in power dynamics that leaders of grassroots initiatives face in college campuses. They identified five different types of power dynamics that grassroots leaders are faced with – oppression, silencing, controlling, inertia and micro-aggressions. Oppression referred to attempts at threatening the jobs and livelihood of the leaders by getting them fired or demoted, which can be seen as coercive power. In the Pakistani context, oppression could also mean police brutality and jailing political grassroots activists. Silencing, controlling and inertia can be seen as second face of power, in which the college attempts to create conditions which do not allow discourse on certain topics. Microaggressions can be seen as the third form of power, being related to bullying and discrediting people.

My research will be largely focusing on the first face of power through the decision-making process within KBT, while also trying to look for other power relationships as they exist within KBT and outside. Hilhorst (2000) also warns against assuming a unitary homogenous identity for everyone in a social movement, given the internal diversity within social movements. There are not just two groups, mutasireen and non-mutasireen, but other intersectional identities of gender and religion that may also affect the power wielded by members. An analysis of power and community power in social movements will allow us to dissect the inequalities in agenda setting and decision making, while also building an understanding of how organizations can build power among its members.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Research Questions

The research will focus on the following questions:

1. What is the organizational structure of KBT and how is it implemented?
 - a. Does KBT follow the trend of moving from informal to formal structures?
2. How does KBT deal with internal challenges, especially with respect to power and empowerment of mutasireen?
3. What are the external challenges that KBT faces and how do they impact organizing in Pakistan?

Research Methodology

The research is an exploratory case study conducted under the umbrella of Vanderbilt IRB #190336. This was an already exempted IRB project that conducted key informant interviews from various international professional and volunteer community members. The current study focused on key informant interviews that were involved in Karachi Bachao Tehreek, a grassroots social movement organization in Karachi, Pakistan.

Study Context and Prior Research in Pakistan:

Karachi is not only the largest city in Pakistan, but also one of the largest around the world. According to the 2023 Census, Karachi's population stands at 20.3 million (Wali, 2023). Estimates suggest that over 50% of the population lives in informal settlements, also known as Katchi Abadis (Hasan & Arif, 2018; Husain et al., 2019). Also known as squatter settlements or "Katchi Abadis", there is a breadth of research on informal settlements in Karachi (Anwar et al., 2021; Gazdar & Mallah, 2011; Hasan, 2015). These scholars have charted the development of informal settlements post partition, showing how people came to settle in many places and how

the government subsequently regularized the settlements. Subsequent to Katchi Abadi Act of 1978 which regularized these settlements and provide residents a housing lease, Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority was created to oversee that project (Hasan, 2015).

An estimated 67,562 housing units have been demolished between 1997-2020 for urban development projects and anti-encroachment drives to recover public land (Anwar et al., 2021). Many of these settlements have resisted displacement and demolition, at times forcing the government to provide compensation or rehabilitation (Anwar et al., 2021). Nonetheless, residents continue to face countless threats of eviction over time, and many have not been able to get their lease. Land ownership and development is also contested in Karachi, with no clear distinction on which city or provincial institution has authority over which area (Hasan et al., 2013). Moreover, instead of providing proper regularization, government officials take bribes from residents in many cases as protection against demolition and eviction, while utility company officials also take bribes to provide utility connections (Budhani et al., 2010).

The anti-encroachment operations along Karachi Circular Railway began in December 2018, following the orders of Supreme Court to remove encroachments along the railway lines (Ahad and Khan, 2018). As per some researchers, 4,653 families in 28 different settlements were being forced to move due to the project (Anwar et al. 2021). The site was being revived through a project under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (Hasan, 2017). Around that time, various organizations such as Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Awami Workers Party (AWP), Urban Resource Center (URC) and Pakistan Institute of Labor Education and Research (PILER) tried to collaborate with the Mutasireen Committee of the affected population in order to resist evictions (Anwar et al. 2021).

Karachi Bachao Tehreek emerged as a coalition of various organizations to concentrate their efforts against demolitions by bringing together activists, researchers, lawyers and residents. It was formed in 2018 by members of Awami Workers Party, Aurat Haq, Women Democratic Forum, lawyers and other activists. KBT was formed in opposition to another alliance, the Joint Action Committee, which KBT members felt was very apologetic and non-confrontational in its approach (Anwar et al. 2021). On the contrary, KBT wanted to focus on grassroots mobilization and resisting eviction through radical movement rather than cooperation. In their work, KBT was able to halt two state-led evictions (Anwar et al. 2021). Furthermore, other anti-encroachment operations along Gujjar Nala and Orangi Nala have also started since Karachi Circular Railway, and Karachi Bachao Tehreek has been collaborating with the residents from there to resist evictions and advocate for their rehabilitation.

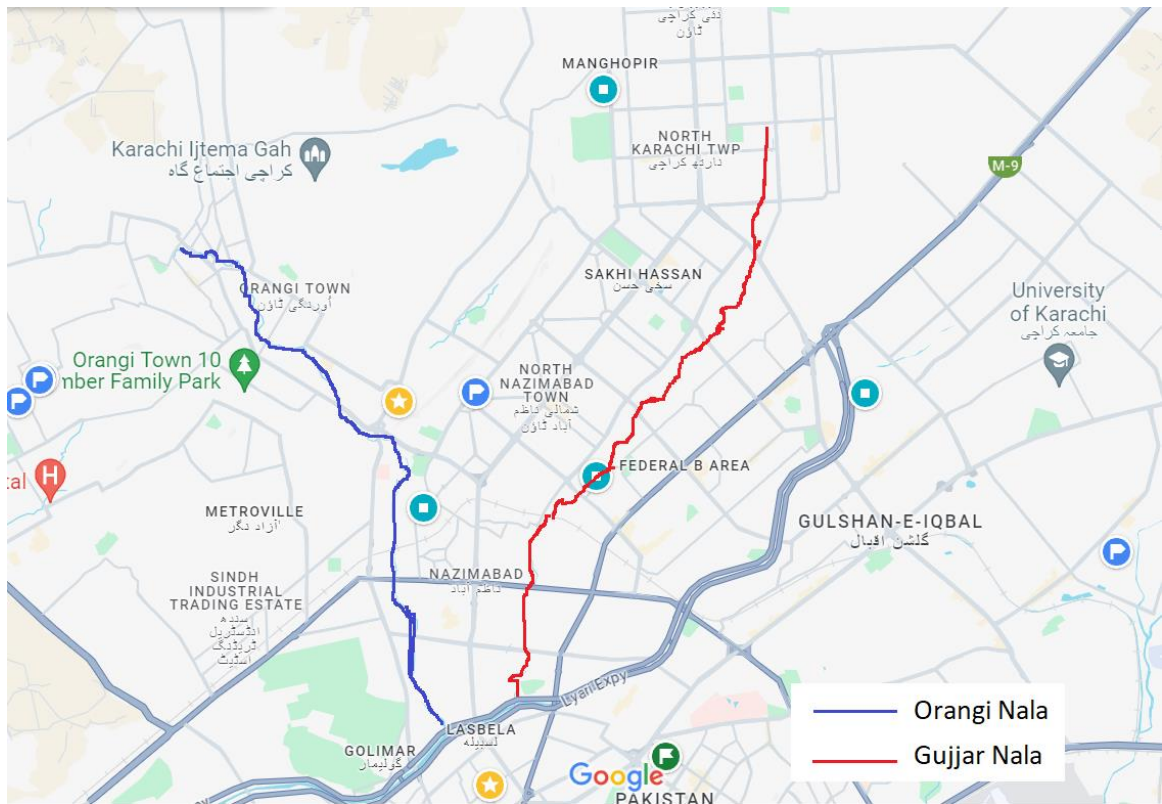


Figure 1: Map of Gujjar and Orangi Nala (Watercourse) Path

On its website, KBT defines itself as “an evolving & growing movement of demolition affected people and their allies in Karachi, Pakistan.”¹ While KBT was formed as a collective emanating from Awami Workers Party (AWP) and other left leaning political groups, it has maintained a loose organizational structure that stresses being a leaderless grassroots movement.

Author Positionality Statement

I was born in Pakistan and have been a resident of Karachi since 2010. I became involved with KBT in early 2020 through a friend, who was active within the organization and they needed more volunteers at that time. I conducted participatory research and survey with KBT to counter government narrative of framing the homes of residents as illegal “encroachment”, alongside assisting in mobilization efforts for the anti-eviction campaign. Although I have remained a part of the organization since 2020, I have been inactive for the past two years due to my graduate studies. Nonetheless, I retain personal connections with many members, mutasireen and the organization itself.

I consider myself to be a pragmatist researcher with a post-modernist and critical theory lens. My bachelors training in Social Sciences and Liberal Arts, and my M.Ed. in Community Development and Action have informed my research paradigm, which would also affect the way I conducted my research. My hope with this research is that it not only furthers the knowledge production on structures and empowerment in grassroots organizations, but that it also helps KBT become a better organization through an analysis of its strengths and challenges.

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured in-depth interviews. Limited data were also collected through local news sources reporting on demolition and resistance to

¹ On the homepage at the website accessible at karachibachaotehreek.org (Accessed 18th February 2024)

demolition, along with some archival data available through public press releases and communications sent out by Karachi Bachao Tehreek. Additionally, I have also collected some observational data through having been part of KBT and its various WhatsApp (a cross-platform messaging application) groups.

Sample Selection:

The interview sample was selected through volunteer and purposive sampling. Karachi Bachao Tehreek has a general members group on WhatsApp, which theoretically includes every member that has access to WhatsApp, including affectees and non-affectees both. I sent an interviewee recruitment text in the group in Urdu script, a translation of which is provided in the appendix.

Two people responded to that message, and upon sending a follow-up reminder another additional person responded. Of the three, two were mutasireen and one was a non-mutasireen member. I also sent separate individual messages to seven volunteers working with KBT, and five of them were able to provide me an interview. My goal with the sample selection was to include representation of both, mutasireen and non-mutasireen members of KBT.

I also tried to gather data from mutasireen women, but that was proving to be very difficult and I had zero interviews with them. So, I asked the Convener of Karachi Bachao Tehreek, Khurram Ali Nayyar, to assist me with gathering interview data from mutasireen women and he connected me with the General Secretary of Gujjar Nala Mutasireen Committee, Arif Shah, who assisted me in connecting with mutasireen women and interviewing them. The biggest challenge here was lack of technology access and internet. Arif gathered three women at a single house to provide one interview together, and that became a mini-focus group.

Table 2: Interview Sample Description

| Interview | Pseudonym | Gender | Status | Interview language | Length (Minutes) |
|-----------|-----------|--------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Hashim | Male | Mutasireen | Urdu | 43 |
| 2 | Nadia | Female | Non-mutasireen | Urdu + English | 106 |
| 3 | Hamid | Male | Non-mutasireen | Urdu | 150 |
| 4 | Maheen | Female | Non-mutasireen | English | 98 |
| 5 | Javed | Male | Mutasireen | Urdu | 49 |
| 6 | Ebad | Male | Mutasireen | Urdu | 54 |
| 7 | Yasmeen | Female | Non-mutasireen | English | 94 |
| 8 | Muneeba | Female | Non-mutasireen | English | 67 |
| 9 | Mehtab | Female | Mutasireen | Urdu | 66 |
| 10 | Khalida | Female | Mutasireen | Urdu | 44 |
| 10 | Uzma | Female | Mutasireen | | |
| 10 | Samreen | Female | Mutasireen | | |
| 11 | Bilal | Male | Non-mutasireen | English | 95 |

A total of 11 Interviews were conducted with 13 key informants. 6 interviews were with volunteers, while 5 with mutasireen. Because 3 mutasireen provided a single interview together, the total sample size of mutasireen is 7. The average interview length was 79 minutes, with the longest interview lasting 150 minutes, while the shortest one being 43 minutes. The interviews with the mutasireen were considerably shorter than those with volunteers. Table 2 provides details regarding the sample demographics and interview length.

Interview Protocol

The interviews were conducted through Zoom. I started the interviews by providing my introduction and then explaining the purpose of the study. After that, the participants were informed of the confidentiality and anonymity of data. After informing them that their participation was voluntary and they could choose to end the interview when they wanted, I asked them their permission to record the interview, so I could take notes and review it later. All

the participants agreed to having the interview recorded, and most of them told me that they were also okay with me using their real names.

The interview was semi-structured, with a script adapted largely from the existing IRB proposal. The script guided the major questions I wanted to ask them, but the interviews remained flexible with follow-up prompts and shuffling of the order of questions. The interview questions can be seen in Appendix B. Question 2 and 3 yielded the most generative responses. Question 2 asked the interviewee to describe the organizational structure of KBT and its committees, and question 3 inquired about the biggest issues and challenges in organizing. Generally, the conversation flowed very smoothly with participants sometimes even answering aspects of question 3 before I asked that question. But sometimes I also used follow-up prompts about power relations and decision making where appropriate. Question 6 – about research and data collection – was least generative, especially during interviews with mutasireen.

The interviews with the Mutasireen were conducted in Urdu, and two interviews with volunteers were also conducted in Urdu. The remaining interviews with the volunteers were conducted in English (with some bilingual usage of Urdu) in order to avoid errors in translation and to speed up the process of transcription.

Approach to Data Analysis:

The interviews were transcribed using “TurboScribe” transcription and translation service, which is based on Whisper AI Technology. The transcripts were rechecked manually for accuracy and errors in transcription and translation. The TurboScribe service was chosen due to being secure and providing SSL encryption for sensitive data.

Data were analyzed through initial hypotheses and themes emerging from the research questions. Special attention was paid to conversations regarding power, leadership, decision

making, organizational structure, research, and organizational linkages. However, the approach to data analysis was not merely deductive using the frameworks of organizational structure and empowerment. Inductive approach to data analysis was also incorporated by using coding and Grounded Theory Method (Babbie, 2010).

Coding was conducted in three stages, with the first one being called open coding. In this stage, I generated a large number of codes through open coding, which meant that I generated a code for anything that came up during interviews. This led to a total of over 110 codes being generated, with some being closely related with minute differences, while others referencing entirely different things. In the second stage of axial coding, connections between these codes were identified and they were grouped together to form a single code where appropriate. After shortlisting important codes through axial coding, selective coding was used to group together larger ideas related to research questions and my findings. This method has helped dissect important concepts and organize central concepts respectively. It must be noted, that while in selective coding there is generally an overarching category that is developed and compiled, there is no single overarching category here, but rather multiple overarching categories due to the depth of data and research questions.

Chapter 4: Findings

The interviews opened up various threads of conversation around how KBT functions and its challenges. During the open coding phase, 110 codes were generated which were then reframed and narrowed down to 31 major codes in axial coding. The axial codes were then grouped into 6 major categories through selective coding, as seen in Table 3 on the next page. The selective coding column also reflects how the findings section has been organized.

Organizational structure:

KBT's organizational structure has gone through significant changes over time and continues to evolve. In this section, we will go through details about what the current organizational structure is, and how it emerged. KBT aims to be a leaderless organization, with a convener appointed for coordination purposes rather than operating as a chairman. But there has been no formal documentation of the processes of KBT and its structure, which makes this section important to our research focus.

Recruitment:

Currently, there are two major categories of people involved in the organization – those that are directly affected by demolitions (mutasireen), and those that are not. KBT had no mutasireen representation in the start, as it was started as a coalition by social and political activists from various progressive groups. Some of the organizations and people that came to join the coalition were from Women's Democratic Forum (WDF), Progressive Students Federation (PrSF), Aurat March, and Karachi Urban Lab (KUL).

Table 3: Axial and Selective Codes Generated

| Axial Codes | Selective codes | Major Research Questions Addressed |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Recruitment | Organizational structure | Qs. 1 |
| Committees | | |
| Communication | | |
| Leadership (or lack of) | | |
| Horizontalism | | |
| Informal hierarchies | Internal challenges | Qs. 2 |
| Burnout and demoralization | | |
| Funding | | |
| Interpersonal conflicts | External challenges | Qs. 3 |
| Cultural norms | | |
| State violence | | |
| Competing responsibilities | | |
| Cooptation | | |
| Mainstream media | Mutasireen Empowerment | Qs. 2 |
| Urgency | | |
| Awareness | | |
| Empathy | | |
| Capacity building | | |
| Facilitation | Narrativization | Qs. 2 & 3 |
| Ownership | | |
| Social media | | |
| Participatory research | | |
| Utilizing privilege and access | Organizing Approach: Evolution | Qs. 1 & 1a |
| Collaboration vs confrontation | | |
| Ideological lens | | |
| Formalization | | |
| Future aspirations | | |

Recruitment happened through personal and political networks, reaching out to other political groups and social activists to invite them to work with KBT on the issue of demolitions and evictions. However, in terms of decision making on recruitment of new members, it was decided that KBT would function on consensus rather than majority voting. Hamid also says that this would have prevented from individuals or a group taking over the organizations decision making if they simply got to a majority. Hamid explains this below:

“We discussed that some people work with their individual name, and when they do that, they take the organization here and there. So, it is better that we make a mechanism on the criteria for the joining of new organizations or new people. So, we decided that before any new person enters, we will not vote but a consensus will be formed. If everyone agrees, then that person will join. Otherwise, it could be a problem if there are more of our members from AWP and they take the decisions on basis of majority. Or if any other group has more members and they take the decisions”

KBT was working with residents of Karachi Circular Railway, another neighborhood that was undergoing demolitions, by protesting against the demolitions alongside the residents. The extent of KBT’s participation was in lending support to residents and having discussions with them or protesting with them, but they were not a part of KBT. When the court ordered demolitions in Gujjar Nala, a KBT member got connected with a few residents from Kausar Niazi colony through her research work. That became the point of entry for KBT in Gujjar Nala. At that point, other social organizations and groups also had presence in the area.

KBT built trust within the mutasireen over time with continued presence and participation. The woman they were in touch with at first connected them with two other residents from the community that could help mobilize other residents. In that way, KBT continued to build connections and have discussions with the members. After the demolitions started, KBT invited all residents to a communal meeting. This allowed community members to voice their issues, connect and mobilize together. Through the meetings, mutasireen became more involved with KBT and are now part of the KBT members WhatsApp group.

As per the current recruitment mechanisms, all mutasireen are automatically eligible for membership of KBT, while non-mutasireen have to start as a volunteer and are allowed to join as

a member with group consensus after having worked for about 2-3 months consistently. Volunteers are largely recruited through social media, through either posting requests for volunteers directly or through people reaching out to KBT themselves. Volunteers work ad-hoc, on task-oriented needs within separate committees before they are added to larger KBT members group.

Committees and Communication:

The brunt of the work is divided into various specific task-oriented committees. For example: social media committee is responsible for posting on social media, legal committee assists with the court and legal recourse, fundraising committee handles donations and reimbursements for organizational activities, volunteer committee recruits and manages volunteers.

However, these committees do not have a formal standing or structure. As Bilal commented when talking about his participation in those committees, “These aren't really committees so much as ad hoc working groups... there's no real structure there, there's no formal leadership or any formal roles in any of these groups.”

These groups are made for the purpose of coordinating between people working on that task. They are housed on WhatsApp, with group members being the people that are working on that aspect of organizational activities. For example, there were groups called “KBT Data Collection” and “Data entry KBT” that were formed in 2021 when KBT was conducting surveys, and then later needed to digitize that data. After that, those groups have remained inactive since 2022 and have been disbanded – with new groups taking over their place. This structure of various committees is related to the concept of nestedness put forward by Zapata Campos et al.

(2022), where autonomous groups are created to engage in new activities and they remain porous to create flexibility to adapt to ever-changing environments.

The committees are also a form of an empowering organizational setting that allows for opportunity role structure, where a member can perform lots of different tasks to enhance their participation and build their competencies. However, it must be noted that these roles have no formal titles except being a member of that committee.

Volunteers are also added to these specific task-oriented committees before they make their way to the general KBT members group. There are some mutasireen in these committees depending upon the type of committee, the majority members of these committee groups are non-mutasireen members of KBT. So where do the mutasireen fit in?

KBT has separate mutasireen committees nested within it, which are run by mutasireen from different areas. This allows for mutasireen to organize together and engage in decision making. The most robust of them is the Gujjar Nala mutasireen committee, which has a formal structure and meets every week to resolve their issues.

Gujjar Nala mutasireen committee includes grassroots members from the mutasireen that are affected by demolitions and is run by the mutasireen themselves. The larger committee includes smaller neighborhood subcommittees from the different neighborhoods along Gujjar Nala as well. The mutasireen committee is an integral part of KBT, and has a major say in all aspects of strategy and decision making. This committee is the only one in KBT that has an actual formal structure.

There is also a separate core committee within the Gujjar Nala mutasireen committee comprising of 19 members, including a convener, a general secretary, 2 legal advisors, and 2 members who handle finance, and representatives from different neighborhoods along Gujjar

Nala. The convener and general secretary were elected, while the finance and legal advisors were appointed due to their expertise. The core committee meets regularly to discuss strategy, while the larger mutasireen committee members are updated and consulted regularly through their representatives and KBT members WhatsApp group.

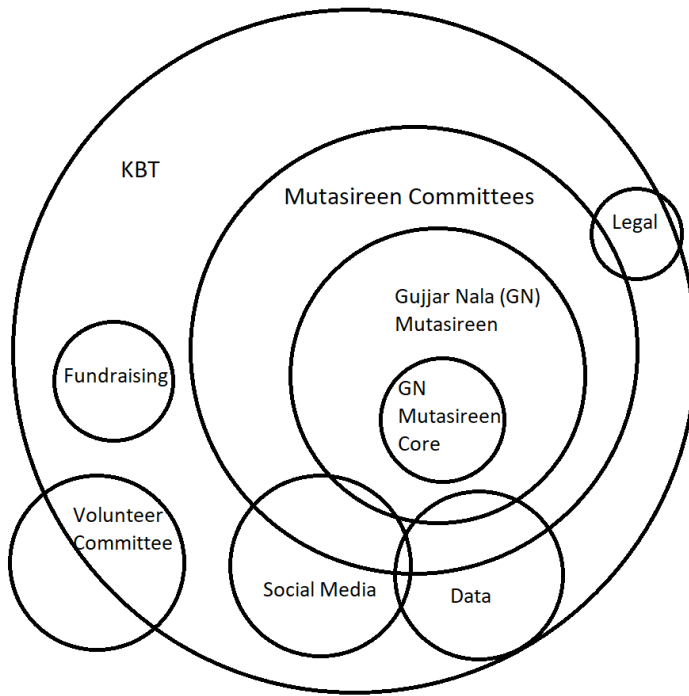


Figure 2: Committees of KBT - a simplified overview.

For a while, there was also another committee called “KBT Coordination”, which has been disbanded now but was a major discussion and decision-making group in the past. We will discuss that committee in the next section.

Leadership and Horizontalism:

Does the existence of a smaller mutasireen core committee mean that some people have more decision-making authority than others? Although you cannot possibly provide equal access to everyone, especially given the challenges to participation if mutasireen are busy in just working to survive, the mechanisms of KBT tends to avoid centralization. There are general

meetings called to discuss issues between the mutasireen before taking larger decisions. When asked if there was hierarchy in mutasireen committee, Muneeba commented that:

Yeah, it's not a very typical (organization) as in the president will say something and has final veto. The mutasireen committee is also a fairly well-oiled machine where if decisions have to be made, it is done through discussion and it is done through mutual consensus. So the leadership that exists is once again essentially to coordinate but not to dictate or come up with decisions only. Everything is done on a consensus basis because the nature of the work impacts too many people.

In-fact, all the mutasireen I spoke to stressed that the decision-making authority lies with the “awaam” (public) and the mutasireen themselves. As Nayab commented, “No one takes decisions alone. We all take decisions together. We all sit together and discuss and only then we take a decision.”

Javed also echoed the same perspective, saying that the mutasireen make the decisions through general meetings and core committee meetings. He said that there was a process of democracy, where a decision is only made if people agree with that. This shows a commitment to participative democracy and horizontalism (Milkman, 2017), and that the first face of power was shared with collaborative decision making.

While the mutasireen felt they had high decision-making power, the non-mutasireen did not share the same sentiment. They felt that while there was consultation with mutasireen, the non-mutasireen were the ones expected to make decisions. This was especially true in the past, before the disbandment of KBT Coordination committee.

KBT Coordination was an organic group formed for the purposes of coordinating and communicating between members of KBT, but it comprised of only non-mutasireen at that time

in 2021. Maheen explains that she made the coordination group because at that time there were many different WhatsApp groups but there was no one place to coordinate between the groups. The group provided some semblance of structure. However, over time, this group came to gain increasing importance in terms of discussion and decision-making authority. Bilal explains this, “The coordination group was also created in a horizontal way, in an organic way. It was not intended to be some sort of hierarchical structure. (But) groups which don't have a structure or any formal processes, a structure starts to emerge. If you don't do anything, then centralization will just happen by default over time.”

KBT coordination group did not have any mutasireen until late 2022, and even afterwards the representation of mutasireen lagged behind the representation of non-mutasireen activists in that group. Eventually, a conflict arose between a mutasireen member of KBT and another non-mutasireen member of KBT, which led to a split and the disbandment of KBT coordination group. One faction changed their name to Sindh Bachao Tehreek (SBT), while KBT started a new WhatsApp group called “KBT Members Group” which I have referenced earlier. With that restructuring, some members feel that mutasireen have now a larger role in decision making and they are hoping to increase that further. On the issue of decision making, Maheen commented,

So, it depends on what decision. I think previously, even a year and a half ago, I would have said that the mutasireen don't have that much decision-making power. But now, because of the member group where membership has opened up, and that grassroots politics being allowed to grow more, people kind of organizing themselves with weekly meetings, etc., I think because of that now there are some decisions that cannot be taken by the Central Committee. That can only be taken by the mutasireen. For example, what lawyer is going to represent a case?

This comment indicates that while mutasireen make decisions, the second form of power is not shared equally. The non-mutasireen still set the agenda of what decisions can or cannot be taken without mutasireen approval. Nonetheless, it was stressed by all interviewees that there is no discrimination in KBT based on status or seniority – how Shabana called it “There is no Chota Bara (big or small) in KBT.” The non-mutasireen members, for their part, exhibited awareness of their privilege and power differential due to their social status. They stressed that they saw their role as facilitators for the mutasireen rather than their leaders. However, as a facilitator non-mutasireen are likely to hold greater power in its second and third form, by shaping the agenda and framing of discussion. On the other hand, the mutasireen repeated that despite being not of their class, the non-mutasireen members had never made them feel that they are less than them.

There are no leadership titles held by anybody in any of the committees beside the mutasireen committee which has its own structure. However, Khurram holds the role of convener for the larger KBT group, the organization as a whole. This title holds no executive power and was defined by Khurram as “someone who can coordinate between everyone so that a collective decision can be taken.” Convener does not have any executive decision-making authority. Therefore, KBT manages to create a horizontal structure. All members I talked to expressed admiration for this aspect of KBT, some also mentioning that they felt more comfortable participating in KBT’s discussions as their opinions were heard even back when they were new members. This created a sense of collaborative engagement between members, as opposed to organizations which prioritize seniority and hierarchy.

But why does the mutasireen committee have a more hierarchical structure than other committees of KBT? Muneeba suggests that this can usually serve as a source of prestige and

honor for those in charge. That is part of the reason why mutasireen committee has more titles and honorary roles, such as general secretary, convener, and representatives from different neighborhoods along the Gujjar Nala area. However, again, while these people have specific titles and a more central role in the committee, the decisions are still built on discussion and consensus formation.

Internal Challenges:

Informal Hierarchies

There is understood agreement in KBT upon the fact that the organization is built upon consensus rather than executive decision making. Nonetheless, there are a few names that frequently pop in conversations. When talking with the mutasireen, it can be seen that they revere “Khurram bhai”, the convener of KBT, and he is short handedly referred to as their leader.

With the privilege and the status that non-mutasireen enjoy, it can be easy to derail the organization and make it about individual actors. Which is why in all the interviews with non-mutasireen, they presented a great sense of awareness of their own privilege along with a commitment to center the mutasireen and their experience rather than themselves. Khurram has also continuously rejected the moniker of leader, insisting that there is no leader in the organization while uplifting the mutasireen and the importance of their role. Bilal explains what happens in organizations where there is no formal structure:

Groups that don't have a structure, what tends to happen is that the people who are doing the most work and the people who have accumulated the most context, they tend to accumulate information and the ability to make decisions as well. And enhance power, so they end up in a position of privilege within the group and (they) have way more agency than other people.

Because of the lack of structure, an informal hierarchy starts to emerge. Nadia suggests that this is because Khurram is very good with being on the ground and going to sit with the community, which is why they relate more to him. Even though he may be hailed as a leader by some people, the decision making is always collective and Khurram does not have any executive power. “He is an image, a pedestal, but his power is not in decision making. As long as he knows that this is the image that people have and he's not going to let it go to his head - and we are going to make sure he doesn't let it go to his head - then it works.”

When this issue regarding him being perceived as a leader was posed to Khurram, he responded by acknowledging that this is indeed a challenge, and it happens because the general culture of the masses has been developed around leaders, such as party leaders. He reiterated that it is important from his end to always negate that title, and that he also wrote an article for group members on why they should not do this and on the negative consequences this can have. He hopes that this culture of leadership can change over time through the organizing efforts of KBT and through study circles and literature that can effect social-cultural change.

Burnout and demoralization

There are some major internal obstacles to grassroots social movements in Pakistan and in general. One of them was referenced to as “burnout”, being the term used by most of the non-mutasireen members to refer to the mental and emotional exhaustion due to the demanding nature of work. Nadia captured this as follows:

“Burnout is a huge problem in activist circles, because you're doing a lot of things, you don't even realize the amount of work that you have to do to sustain this, right? You think, okay, I'll come here as a designer, but the next day, there's a call, I have to go to a protest. Then at night, there's a call, okay, I have to go into the community, I have to

mobilize them for the protest. Then I have to arrange buses, so I have to arrange buses and where will I get the money for that? So I have to fundraise...”

It was found that people have to do a lot of different things, and members are generally a part of various different committees. As such, the amount of work that they have to put in to sustain their work quickly adds up. This leads to physical exhaustion and burnout. Another aspect of burnout is emotional exhaustion, where this type of works requires a lot of emotional labor as well. There have been multiple deaths along the nala due to evictions, with people dying of state violence, disease, negligence and lack of basic necessities. To be working in a population that is under threat of survival, witnessing state violence and deaths or injuries of people that you have formed connections with or recently interacted with can be very challenging and emotionally taxing for organizers.

Lastly, the victories are also very small and spread out. For example, KBT has been successful at pressuring government to ensure provision of compensation rent money that the mutasireen were promised by the government. However, that has taken two years to realize (with some mutasireen still waiting for their compensation), and even the court decisions take a lot of time and are not always in favor of the mutasireen. As such, this can also lead to demoralization among mutasireen, non-mutasireen members of KBT, and volunteers.

Funding

Another internal challenge is the lack of funds. Organizing can be expensive and requires a lot of money. KBT does not have any fixed or consistent source of funding, and they mostly rely on small donations from individual actors. KBT members do not accept NGO (Non-Government Organizational) or INGO (International Non-Government Organizational) funding, or from any other corporate organization. Muneeba, who is part of the fundraising committee,

explains, “We are anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist, and we don't want to be beholden to anybody. So whatever funds we collect is really just donations. But we don't accept donations from like corporations or businesses or, you know, like USAID or any other funding agency like that, because we just don't believe in that. The funds are mostly small donations from locals or diaspora community members.”

KBT's social media team has been very instrumental in raising awareness regarding this issue and generating funds for organizing. There is also a GoFundMe for international donors. These funds are managed by the fundraising committee who keep track of donations and expenses. The fundraising committee reimburses releases money in advance for some activities, while sometimes people are reimbursed later.

Ebad, a member of Gujjar Nala mutasireen core committee, mentioned that it costs 25,000-30,000 rupees to just conduct a press conference; 100,000-150,000 rupees get spent on transportation for protests. Not only that, the mutasireen committee operations also require money for operations, and Ebad suggested that many times they have to pay these small expenses out of pocket. Then there are also sudden unexpected expenses, where they require bail money for activists or protesters arrested by the police. KBT has also at times offered food and ration support to some mutasireen undergoing extreme hardship or death in the family, however that process has been largely conducted by members of KBT through personal donations rather than as a mechanism of KBT.

Interpersonal Conflicts:

KBT members are not a homogenous group, and as such there are bound to be some disagreements and conflicts. This risk is even more prominent due to the lack of formal structure and agreements between members on the mechanisms of KBT. I will divide and analyze the

conflicts within KBT in two different categories: between mutasireen themselves, and between non-mutasireen and mutasireen.

The conflicts between mutasireen emerge due to the heterogenous nature of the population that KBT is working in, and the existing structures of discrimination and structural inequalities. In the start, when mutasireen committees were formed, Hamid recalls that when neighborhood mutasireen subcommittees were being formed, there was a lot more representation of Kausar Niazi colony in KBT because that is where KBT started their work from, and the other areas started to develop an issue and resentment because of that. There were lots of internal conflicts within mutasireen in the beginning, and Maheen explains that situation:

“In the beginning, it was like, there was a lot of, because there's so much marginalization in these communities. And there's so many, you know, so much inequality, along like religious, gender, all kinds of lines, class, caste, etc. I think because of that, there was just a lot of kind of interpersonal shit that was coming up, a lot of messiness... Then there was a lot of fighting. There was constant, just like, like shouting matches. And that was very, very tough as well, because it kept on distracting from the actual problem.”

There was also an incident of one of the mutasireen members embezzling funds from their committee and asking other mutasireen to pay for legal services (which KBT was offering for free). At that time, mutasireen often brought up these disputes and issues to the non-mutasireen members of KBT, and they expected them to mediate and resolve the issues. This was again another challenge and added responsibility on non-mutasireen. However, overtime, with a more formalized and robust structure in their mutasireen committee now, the mutasireen are largely conducting their own conflict resolution and mediation.

This is not to say there is less heterogeneity in the mutasireen committee now, in fact the mutasireen were proud of how connected they are now with other community groups that include people from different religions and ethnicities. They credited KBT for building that awareness and unity in them, cherishing the fact that they celebrated Christmas with members of Christian community along the Nala.

The second type of conflict, between non-mutasireen and mutasireen was one that spiraled and led to an eventual split of the organization. As discussed earlier, KBT had no formal structure or charter, but it was an organization built on consensus and mutual decision making. This conflict escalated due to some specific instances like the one presented below, but boiled down to largely a difference of ideology and organizing approach.

One of the non-mutasireen members of KBT that was part of the former coordination group was highly active in KBT's group. However, over time, that member took some decisions and attended meetings without informing the rest of the group, which built some tension among other members of the group. Because this led to some mutasireen women missing the members meeting, a mutasireen member called to inquire and confront this issue. However, the conversation escalated with the non-mutasireen abusing the mutasireen, and the mutasireen abusing the non-mutasireen back with a misogynistic slur.

This then led to a huge divide in the organization, with the non-mutasireen refusing to work with anyone that aligned with that mutasireen member. Many among the KBT group were initially sympathetic to the non-mutasireen, but the mutasireen apologized and upon hearing his side of story they also recognized how that conflict arose. However, the aggrieved non-mutasireen member refused to let this slide, and for a long time KBT members were under

tremendous stress trying to manage both ends. Eventually, the organization split, with the non-mutasireen member switching their factions name to Sindh Bachao Tehreek.

Ebad, and others, explained this conflict to be one of ideology. While this incident was the tipping point, the seeds were sown before. According to them, KBT is a grassroots movement with people working alongside mutasireen, and this conflict arose over time because the non-mutasireen actor had started working independently and taking executive decisions rather than through consensus and collective decision making.

In the interviews I conducted, I sensed an understanding of why the non-mutasireen was aggrieved, but also recognition and empathy towards the condition of the mutasireen. For example, the community is very patriarchal, and that is the reality of the society that KBT operates in – so while the non-mutasireen stress the importance of working on cultural change, they also understand where the mutasireen was coming from.

It should be noted that I had my interviews with only current members of Karachi Bachao Tehreek, and that ex-members who are now part Sindh Bachao Tehreek may see the incident differently.

External Challenges

Cultural Norms:

Following up on the conflict in previous section, we come to the larger issue of cultural norms. I debated whether to put this under internal or external challenges, as it also affects the internal workings of KBT. However, I decided to put it in external challenges due to this being outside of KBT's control and purview.

Participatory social movement can be exclusionary to some marginalized groups, such as women, as they have less power to voice their concerns publicly (Guijt and Shah 1998;

Cornwall, 2000). Non-mutasireen members repeatedly expressed that they wished to see more representation of women in the mutasireen committee, but that their participation was limited due to patriarchy and cultural norms. To explore this further, I interviewed 4 mutasireen women to see their opinions about this (one separately, three together in one interview).

Surprisingly, they did not consider the representation of women in KBT to be a challenge, and in fact said that women were more than willing to participate and were standing shoulder to shoulder with men in protests. To them, there were no direct barriers to participation of women when asked directly about it. However, looking more closely, their responses indicated a different set of challenges and expectations that women have to live up to, and those are the internalized challenges that they face.

For example, the concept of “parda” (veil), which is used to symbolize modesty and honor, came up multiple times. Mutasireen women expressed that because of this issue of demolitions, women have lost their parda and have had to be out on the streets now, which has resulted in a loss of honor (izzat). Samreen says that after demolitions “people are now living in tents, with just a curtain in front of it. How are women supposed to protect their honor?”

The women often saw their participation in KBT in terms of necessity and oppression, rather than empowerment. This can be understood as their having lost their homes and facing financial insecurity. Moreover, the expectations levied upon women are also different. Women repeatedly mentioned the burden of household responsibilities and the challenges of maintaining those alongside organizing. At times, they also had to take up work to pay for the increase in living expenses. As such, while the opportunity cost for participation of men is just the loss of wages, women face a double opportunity cost of losing their earning capacity and also foregoing their household tasks in order to participate.

I personally also found these interviews the most challenging, being constantly under observation by men around the women. There is a lack of technology and access for the women. While Mehtab spoke to me through her own phone, that call was arranged by coordinating through Ebad rather than through direct communication. Moreover, the interview with Khalida, Uzma and Samreen was conducted on Ebad's phone, and he was present throughout along with another member of the household. The presence of men definitely impacted the interview, as they also kept providing some guidance on what to say, which can again be seen as some level of patriarchal control. Uzma and Samreen also lack access to WhatsApp, and therefore are not part of the KBT members group – an issue that multiple mutasireen women face.

Despite these cultural challenges, KBT members continue their efforts around awareness and participation of women. KBT's non-mutasireen members constitute a large majority of women. This has not only been empowering for women, but also for some men. Bilal felt that really helped him participate, and he describes this in these terms:

“I feel KBT has done a great job at being a feminist for lack of a better term... Amongst the members who are not mutasireen, the majority by a large margin are women. Like that's something that I really felt and that really made the space more accessible to people. Even to men who don't tend to do well in male-dominated contexts, like me... And there is like sort of structural patriarchy there (in mutasireen). There's very little that you can do to totally neutralize that, but even there I felt like women were centered and given a voice more than other political groups that I've seen work in the area or from political groups that I've been part of.”

As mentioned by Bilal, KBT's focus on gender has not only been limited to non-mutasireen, but has also been felt and been slowly reflected in the mutasireen members of

organization through increasing participation of women in protests and organizing. All of the non-mutasireen members expressed their desire to keep working on tackling the issue of patriarchy to increase participation of women. However, that is more of a long-term goal, with the immediate focus being on securing the rehabilitation and safety of mutasireen.

State Violence:

Pakistan is a security state, and there is a lot of risk associated with campaigning against the state. KBT members have had to face police brutality at various protests, with many even being arrested for their resistance. At one protest, young boys of the mutasireen were arrested in the night from the neighborhood and the police subjected them to torture, as Mehtab recalled the incident in which her son was arrested. The police then proceeded to demand bribes from mutasireen to release their family members. There have also been FIRs lodged against mutasireen to disrupt their organizing and to break their spirits.

Then there is violence of demolitions, which has led to many mutasireen having been left no choice but to live in unsafe and unhygienic conditions. Some mutasireen died by falling in the nala and drowning due to the lack of safety precautions taken by state after demolitions, while others have fallen sick and died of disease or trauma induced heart attacks.

Beyond the actual risk of state violence, direct and indirect, there is also this constant threat of surveillance and security. Pakistan has a huge issue of activists that speak out against the army or the state going missing, a phenomenon called “missing persons”. Maheen expressed this fear, of being taken away by agencies. This fear was also compounded by the fact that one of their allies in another social movement had been abducted by some people and when they eventually returned, they informed people that agencies gave her a message to ask Maheen to stop participating in KBT while also threatening another member of KBT. This created a lot of

hysteria and panic among the members, and Maheen was unable to participate fully for a long time.

The existence of state violence is ever present in this issue of demolitions and organizing against it, and it can derail momentum and make it difficult to organize people in the face of violence.

Competing Responsibilities:

One of the biggest challenges, faced by mutasireen is of competing responsibilities. To organize and resist against demolitions requires time and effort, and in many cases mutasireen do not have that luxury. My interviews with the mutasireen were shorter and somewhat rushed because they had less time or were in the middle of something, while I was able to get more time with non-mutasireen. Many of the mutasireen are daily wage laborers, and to come to the protest they would have to forego their daily wages. They do not have the resources to let that happen as they live hand to mouth, and doing so would threaten their basic needs and survival.

This is particularly relevant because these people have lost their homes and their livelihoods, and during the conversations with mutasireen they would frequently bring up the difficult situation that they are in right now, talking about the lack of jobs and financial security. Mehtab, while criticizing the government, lamented that, “They (mutasireen) don't have a roof. They don't have a job. Their parents are ill. No one is asking them. No one is telling them. Are you giving them food? No! You have taken away our roof. Now, give us that roof as well.”

KBT members understand and recognize that challenge, and do not blame the mutasireen if they are unable to participate. Instead, they try to make it as easy for mutasireen to participate as they can. They do this by providing transport to the protests, reimbursement for expenses, and

by holding discussion meetings at convenient locations accessible to mutasireen at times that they can participate at, such as in the night when they are free from their work.

Non-mutasireen also face competing responsibilities, given their jobs and personal commitments. However, they still have greater financial freedom and capital to be able to participate more easily. But why should they sacrifice anything to work for other people's benefit? Non-mutasireen cite being passionate about social activism, grassroots mobilization and justice as their motivations. Their desires and passion for social activism, in this case, triumph the sacrifices they have to make and the time they have to give to the movement. But these sacrifices prevent many other people in Pakistan from participating in these movements, especially given the economic precarity that Pakistan is facing (Ethirajan, 2023)

Cooptation

Another external challenge is the risk of cooptation and exploitation. Individuals, organizations and NGOs coopt the movement and exploit the mutasireen for their personal benefit. For example, Ebad and Hamid both mentioned that the NGOs that worked on the issue of demolitions at first were there to just conduct photo ops and raise funding for themselves. Other NGOs and groups, like JAC, were interested in negotiation and collaboration with the government rather than resistance, and they failed to provide the mutasireen their rights.

These experiences led to disillusionment among the mutasireen, making it harder for KBT to gain their trust, as mutasireen felt these social organizations were there to benefit from their misery. While the other groups wanted to speak on behalf of the mutasireen, KBT wanted to work with the mutasireen and amplify their voices. Gaining the trust of mutasireen took time and was a gradual process. This was done through consistent discussions with mutasireen and being present in the community. KBT also had to initially work alongside and compete with other

organizations, such as JAC, for mutasireen's attention. But over time these organizations have left while KBT has continued to remain present in the community, which has also built trust in the mutasireen, who repeatedly mentioned that KBT has been the only organization that has stayed with them through this time.

The risk of cooptation is not with social organizations only, as Muneeba mentions that they have even been approached by researchers who request access to mutasireen to conduct their research, and then they publish their works but mutasireen get no benefit from that work. "I am a researcher as well, and we try to be more mindful of the fact that it (academic research) is very extractive. Academics come and only take information, (they) don't volunteer their time. A mutasireen giving an interview, it's a lot of their time and then also recounting their trauma."

Muneeba's criticism rang true even during my own interviews, as mutasireen often got very passionate when talking about the demolitions and one of them even started crying mid-interview. Muneeba says that because of this extractive nature of research, they have had to become more selective on who they allow access to mutasireen, as they do not wish for others to profit off of their oppression. Yasmeen also echoed the same concerns, and mentioned that KBT had also been approached by foreign bodies and foreign institutes for access to communities. They believe that those groups would profit off that research and get publications for themselves. Instead, KBT wants to focus on research that would not be merely for knowledge generation, but one that would advance the cause of housing justice and help the movement.

Mainstream media

Another big challenge in social movements is the negative coverage and sensationalism by mainstream media (McCurdy, 2012). Interviewees mentioned the selective media coverage and class differentials impacting the media coverage, where the issues of elite are highlighted but

poor people are neglected. Even when calling for press conferences, the journalists would rarely report on KBT and the news was unlikely to be in the front pages. Not only that, Ebad mentioned that journalists would demand bribes to give coverage to their story, despite them having paid to protest at press club to ensure they get journalists to cover their story. In some cases, Ebad claims, that journalists would send in their news report but the editors would not let it come to light.

As such, KBT has had to rely on alternative media, such as social media to establish its presence and demand news coverage over time. We will discuss the effectiveness of social media in the section dedicated to that.

Urgency

A unique challenge to grassroots social movements, especially in a precarious and uncertain situation like this, is the challenge of urgency. For example, if the supreme court announces demolitions, KBT has to quickly organize a protest and resist that. Or sometimes people are arrested and KBT quickly needs to demand their release or arrange bail money. At times, the non-mutasireen are not able to reach the site of violence immediately, and this can also lead to some resentment and disillusionment among the mutasireen.

The Pakistani political landscape is very unpredictable. One of the mutasireen I was interviewing was on his way to the jail to demand the release of activists that were jailed in the protest in a neighborhood last night. KBT's informal and incomplete structure has allowed it to keep itself flexible in terms of various ad-hoc committees that can immediately address various issues. Nonetheless, urgency can also lead to additional stress and burnout among members as they need to respond to unforeseen events quickly.

Mutasireen Empowerment

KBT's long term goal is to empower mutasireen so that they can run the organization independently without dependence on non-mutasireen. This section will deal with how mutasireen empowerment is seen in KBT.

Awareness and Empathy:

The non-mutasireen members of KBT possessed an awareness of their own privileges and the power and social status that they enjoyed. Some non-mutasireen used public transport, some had their cars, some were earning a lot, some were struggling financially, but they all realized that regardless of their current situation they were nowhere as close to financial insecurity as the mutasireen.

They did not deny that there was any power differential between them and the mutasireen, but they reiterated their commitment towards uplifting the mutasireen voices rather than centering themselves. They recognized that while mutasireen might look up to them, they had to reject that idea that they were superior or more important in any way. The effect of this can be observed during discussions with the mutasireen, where all of them felt that the decision making was collective and that mutasireen held more power, and Mehtab and Hashim (while thankful to non-mutasireen for their support and sacrifices) did not feel that the non-mutasireen were ever treated differently than mutasireen.

In fact, this awareness of their privilege has allowed non-mutasireen to be more conscious about how they could use their privilege to uplift the voices of mutasireen further, which we will discuss in the section on utilizing privilege and access under narrativization.,

The awareness has also enabled empathy among non-mutasireen, who realize where the mutasireen are coming from and try to meet them at their level. For example, in the issue of the

interpersonal conflicts presented above, the non-mutasireen acknowledged that patriarchy was an issue but also recognized that the problem was a social one rather than an individual one, and emphasized that they needed to meet people where they are rather than ostracizing them. This does not mean that the issue should be ignored however, as Hamid mentioned that cultural change takes time and KBT is working towards that as well.

Capacity Building and Facilitation:

Non-mutasireen members see their role as facilitators to the mutasireen, and they hope that KBT can become an organization led by mutasireen where they only have a secondary role to support the mutasireen. However, how effectively has that idea been put into practice?

In some cases, we can see that non-mutasireen enjoy greater share of roles and narrative building, especially in control of committees outside of mutasireen committee. For example, social media is managed by non-mutasireen, with mutasireen supplying content from the ground but non-mutasireen posting that through KBT social media channels. Majority of discussions on the disbanded coordination committee WhatsApp groups used to be held in English, and that also limited participation of mutasireen who understood only Urdu. Coordination committee also had a larger share of non-mutasireen, and they enjoyed greater share of decision-making power.

However, over time, especially in the last year after the split, things have changed. The general members group has more relevance, and the new central committee has a larger mutasireen representation. The mutasireen express that KBT has helped them grow into the activists that they now are, with Ebad commenting that KBT provided mutasireen training on how to talk to media, how to protest, how to present themselves and how to organize community members. Uzma also speaks of herself that KBT taught them how to “walk and talk.”

KBT also ensures that there is mutasireen representation at all events and meetings that they go to, be it meetings with government officials, conferences, or press conferences. Initially, non-mutasireen had to create these opportunities and invite mutasireen, but now Nadia happily reports that mutasireen have been taking charge and arranging meetings themselves, and then inviting non-mutasireen to attend with them or reporting to them afterwards.

Nadia is working on the new structure of KBT, and she hopes that it will be one that facilitates this empowerment even more through the use of capacity building. While mutasireen definitely feel that their capacity has been built by working with KBT, there is no formal mechanism for capacity building except guidance and facilitation. However, the structure of various committees that deal with different tasks and are flexible with membership means that there is potential for opportunity role structure, where mutasireen can become part of those committees and perform different functions.

Ownership

During my interviews, while non-mutasireen interviewees disavowed ownership of KBT, the mutasireen interviewees actively claimed ownership of KBT. This has been a welcome shift, as it was not this way when KBT started. At the start, mutasireen often deferred decision making and authority to non-mutasireen, considering them the owners of KBT. Not only that, they also wanted the non-mutasireen to manage internal disputes between the mutasireen. However, with the formalization of Gujjar Nala mutasireen committee and the increasing participation of mutasireen in KBT central committee, the mutasireen have gained a greater sense of ownership and decision making.

There was a specific incident that multiple interviewees, including mutasireen and non mutasireen (Hamid, Nadia, Maheen, Ebad and Uzma) referred to that was exemplary of this

sense of ownership among mutasireen. During the phase of interpersonal conflict and before the eventual split, KBT's functioning had come to a standstill and the non-mutasireen members suggested that they form a separate group by changing the organizations name. However, the mutasireen were vehemently against that idea and they argued that KBT had built a name for itself and was now known as a credible organization, so they did not want to change their name. Eventually, the other group changed their name and this faction stuck with the name KBT, but this instance showed the extent of ownership and attachment mutasireen had developed with KBT.

Furthermore, Hamid points out that despite the class and status differential, the fact that a prominent mutasireen member of the organization was able to have a conflict like this one with a prominent non-mutasireen member signifies the sense of ownership that mutasireen have within the organization.

Narrativization:

Narrativization is another important theme that came up during my research, and an area where KBT has done a considerable amount of work. This largely refers to creating a competing and alternate narrative to the one offered by the government. The state narrative was that these settlements are illegal encroachments and therefore being cleared for development. The alternate narrative contended that the people have been living there for generations and decades, that they many had lease documents and others were living under approval or corruption of state institutions, and that the demolitions were unjust violence on these people. The alternate narrative was a bottom-up narrative rather than the top down narrative offered by the state. The sections that proceed will deal with how that narrative was built and how KBT sustained it.

Social Media:

Faced with the lack of mainstream media coverage, KBT had to rely on social media to share their work and story. Social media was used in a variety of different ways; as tool for spreading awareness regarding the issue, sharing updates from the ground, documenting state violence and damage, highlighting the flawed government mechanisms, inviting people to join protests, to ask for donations, and to recruit volunteers.

Because of the lack of coverage they received on mainstream media, Hamid says that KBT discussed that the Twitter was a space that had the potential to cause disruption. He called it a bourgeoisie space and said that they decided they wanted to get into this space. The alliances and members that KBT had recruited from other organizations already had a great social media presence, such as Aurat March (A group that organizes a march on International Women's Day, "Aurat" being the Urdu word for woman). The women who worked on Aurat March's social media campaign were able to transfer their skills and put them to use for KBT, building up its social media presence.

This reflects the importance of cross pollination between different social movements. Social media committee members were able to get hashtags related to KBT in twitter trends and gain momentum. They called out the government on their mismanagement in the demolitions and in the shortcomings of their rehabilitation/compensation plan.

KBT's social media handles are managed by non-mutasireen, and they generated content initially which included graphics, pictures and textual data/facts about demolitions. But KBT also helped the mutasireen get their own social media accounts on twitter and encouraged them to post their situation or updates from the ground. Then, KBT social retweeted or reposted their content. Right now, mutasireen share videos and updates from the ground with the members

group and the social media team and ask them to post these, and the social media team puts them in terms that can get traction on social media.

Eventually, with the growing pressure on the government and increasing presence of KBT on social media, KBT started to receive some mainstream media coverage which challenged the state narrative. This created more pressure on the state to provide rehabilitation to the mutasireen. This highlights the importance of social media as a tool for grassroots movements, especially those working against state narrative and on uplifting local, bottom-up narratives.

Participatory Research

Another way KBT has changed the narrative is by engaging in participatory research and data collection methods. To debunk the government claims that the residents of Gujjar Nala were illegal encroachers, KBT conducted two survey studies, one a pilot study of 80 households and another one larger one of 350 households. These surveys were a direct response to the state commissioned survey conducted by NED University of Engineering & Technology upon which government was conducting demolitions and planning to provide compensation cheques to mutasireen.

While the reports do not call their methods participatory, KBT's methodology to data collection was truly participatory in nature. The data were collected by mutasireen themselves, through door knocking and camps for data collection. In fact, one of the strengths of this method was that in the second study, after demolitions had taken place, the mutasireen were able to track down old residents through personal networks that an outside enumerator would have never been able to get access to.

KBT's research was instrumental in debunking popular myths in academic circles, being presented at conferences in Institute of Business Administration, and in shifting the online narrative. However, while the researchers and academics see KBT's research as a valid source of knowledge, the government and state actors do not. They argue that KBT's research is biased, and this is part of the reason why KBT was trying to get another independent survey conducted through a third-party organization, Technical Training Resource Centre (TTRC). However, that has been indefinitely delayed due to funding constraints and some differences they had with the institute on handling of data.

Overall, this section presents the importance of participatory research methods in uplifting grassroots organizations and on how it can be done effectively. Knowledge production is related to power and empowerment, and making mutasireen part of the research process is an empowering process through opportunity role structure and learning practices.

But beyond data collection, the writing and analysis were conducted by non-mutasireen. However, Yasmeen mentions that KBT has been encouraging mutasireen to participate in the writing process to write their own articles based on their own experiences, and this would be another step in the progression of participatory research.

Utilizing Privilege and Access:

KBT's non-mutasireen members are aware of the greater social capital and privilege they enjoy. That becomes a key part of being able to challenge and change state narrative and to develop an alternative one. For example, when talking about the structure and divide between the two groups, Yasmeen mentioned how it was easier for the police and government officials to listen and engage with them rather than with mutasireen because of them being perceived as of middle class and educated status. Therefore, they use that access to become facilitators who can

relay the message of the mutasireen. This is a dimension of access and privilege brought forth by volunteers and non-mutasireen.

Collaboration vs confrontation:

There are two ways to engage with the state for the demands of the mutasireen, either through cordial engagement and negotiation (collaborating) or by opposition and resistance (confrontation). While it has been highlighted that KBT did not see eye to eye with other NGOs and social organizations because they were more interested in negotiation rather than resistance. But an important finding that emerged from my interviews was that KBT utilized both collaboration and confrontation. While its ideological lens is tilted towards radical resistance and opposition, and that carries through its official stance and social media posts, there have been many incidents where KBT has collaborated with state actors.

For example, they once sent a direct message to the Mayor of Karachi, who responded to them as well. KBT has also engaged with Karachi Municipal Council to ensure that the people have received their IDs for reimbursement cheques. However, it would be disingenuous to call this engagement as collaboration, as it is not friendly but based on present needs. Nadia comments that, “sometimes it (communication) is friendly, but it's also like, in the larger scheme, it is like you are against them, you are pressuring them, you are doing your work. If you don't do it (communication), then the work won't happen.”

Organizing Approach: Evolution

KBT's organizing approach has undergone various stages of evolution, and we will discuss the major changes and the drivers of those changes in this section.

Ideological lens:

KBT was borne out of a leftist workers party. The initial founders came from a Maoist school of thought, but through the expansion of coalition many others joined that did not share the same school of thought. In fact, they did not necessarily even have to be leftist. Furthermore, the mutasireen were even less likely to be engaged in leftist politics, but they came to gain a central position in KBT's organizational structure. How did KBT continue to manage its ideological lens?

Hamid sees this diffusion as the primary reason behind the interpersonal conflicts that arose within KBT and led to its split into two factions with some members starting SBT. However, the major ideological difference can be encapsulated by some simple distinctions – in the logics of leadership, with one valuing participation and consensus formation more to center mutasireen (KBT) while the other valuing leadership and feminist ideology more (SBT).

Therefore, I argue that KBT's ideology is one of grassroots participation and empowerment. Muneeba captured this perfectly when talking about how this is the mutasireens' cause as non-mutasireen might leave if their circumstances change, as she said, "you have to remember that you are a passenger on a train that they (mutasireen) need to be driving."

This ideological lens has been the major driver of organizational evolution over time, which has increased the ownership and participation of mutasireen while being engaged in their capacity building and training. However, KBT needs to put this praxis in a formal structure so that similar conflicts do not emerge again. The ideological lens can form the basis of group-based belief system, which is another internal feature of empowering organizations. While members already have a group-based belief around collective decision making, consensus formation and centering mutasireen, it is not formalized. Formalizing this would allow KBT to

become more empowering and increase its ability to resolve ideological conflicts, like the one which led to its split between KBT and SBT.

Formalization:

I have mentioned repeatedly that KBT has no proper formal structure beyond the mutasireen committee. Hashim, a mutasireen, had the same complaint with KBT, as he called it an “infant movement” and a movement that is “not mature” due to lack of structure. However, KBT is undergoing extensive restructuring, and a meeting was called with all members to discuss these next steps last year in late 2023. KBT plans to develop a code of conduct for situations in which such conflicts arise so that they can refer to that. They also plan to restructure committees, where two coordinators will be elected in every committee. One will be a primary coordinator, and another person will be a secondary coordinator that will provide some support to the primary coordinator in order to alleviate some of their burden. There will be a main coordination group, where all coordinators will update each other every month and then pass along the updates from other committees to their own groups. This will ensure that everyone is up to date and able to participate, and that all committees are reporting to each other to stay on the same page. It is important to note again that coordinators do not have decision making powers, but are only individuals assigned to facilitate communication.

It is important to note that this is still a tentative structure that was still under plan and review. This structure would be shared with mutasireen and other members for discussion and might undergo changes before it is put in place. However, this shows that KBT is moving towards formalization of structure, which is in line with Caniglia and Carmin (2005) suggestion that social movement organizations tend to move towards formalization over time to maintain their survival.

Future Aspirations:

KBT continues to evolve and gain an increasing role that resembles community organizing work. Through its restructuring, KBT members hope to create a system that maintains horizontality but also empowers the members by appointing a convener in all subcommittees. Currently, KBT is focused on housing justice and rehabilitation for the mutasireen, but that is not the only issue they are concerned about. Eventually, a lot of members hope to expand and tackle other topics such as climate justice and patriarchy. One method Hamid suggested to get to these cultural changes was by organizing study circles and discussion groups. This indicates potential for KBT to move towards community organizing, moving beyond an issue-based model to a more relational and long-term model of organizing.

KBT also hopes to increase cross community mobilization. That has already happened somewhat, as Gujjar Nala mutasireen now organize to protest alongside residents from other communities that are at risk of demolitions. In fact, people from those areas have also reach out to Gujjar Nala mutasireen committee for guidance and advice. However, some interviewees express that the wish to move from a retroactive approach that deals with demolitions after they have happened to a more proactive approach, which can stop demolitions before they happen.

This aspiration, along with the development of cross-community support in which mutasireen from one area are developing connections and offering support to mutasireen from another area reflect a slight move away from issue based organizing approach to a relationship based organizing, and suggest that the KBT may be not be a mere grassroots movement in the future, as it is shifting closer to a grassroots community organization.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary of Important Findings

KBT claims to have leaderless and horizontal structure that emphasizes consensus building and collective decision making. This structure evolved informally and organically as needed. This informal incompleteness of structure has allowed KBT to be flexible and adapt to emerging situations (Caniglia & Carmin, 2005), and also remain sustainable despite scarce resources by creating various committees as needed (Zapata Campos et al, 2023). The structure of committees has also allowed members to participate in various tasks, creating an empowering opportunity role structure.

But having no formal structure comes with multiple other challenges as well, such as of informal hierarchies. The disavowal of leadership without creating mechanisms to maintain horizontal relationships has meant that informal hierarchies have emerged over time. A convener was appointed to facilitate communication within the organization. The convener, Khurram, has been present on ground with the mutasireen and is highly revered by them, being treated as a de-facto leader. However, Khurram denies leadership. Decision making is still based on consensus and on centering mutasireen voices– the informally understood shared group beliefs.

Lack of formal structure has also meant that KBT has not had a clear pathway to resolution of interpersonal conflicts. Conflicts have been generally dealt with empathy and contextualization, but without a formal process and commitment to shared group beliefs, the organization went through a fracture and eventual split. In the wake of that significant interpersonal conflict which derailed the movement for a while, KBT is moving towards formalization – designing processes of communication between committees and mechanisms for conflict resolution. The new structure should also lead to minimization of informal hierarchies.

KBT has been an empowering organization by formation of subgroups and fostering subgroup linkages. Mutasireen from different areas have their own committee and there is also a larger Gujjar Nala Mutasireen core committee. The mutasireen from Gujjar Nala have come to support not only their own rehabilitation, but also offer their expertise and advice to mutasireen from other areas. KBT has built a sense of ownership and decision making among the mutasireen.

This indicates equity in the first form of power– decision making. Although non-mutasireen have greater privilege and status in society, they recognize that and actively focus on centering the voices of the mutasireen with awareness and empathy. However, second form of power, agenda setting, and third form of power, ideological framing, do not seem to be equally shared right now due to the higher status and privilege of non-mutasireen. A more in-depth study with field data observations is required to dissect that further. The thesis builds knowledge about this potential issue in horizontal movements between different members and groups, and provides a direction that future research could take.

Mutasireen also face the challenge of balancing their basic survival needs with the efforts of organizing and resistance. The destruction of homes of a population that is already marginalized and poor makes it difficult for them to dedicate time to organizing. KBT has mitigated that by providing the empowering setting of incentive management (Christens, 2019), such as reimbursing organizing costs and providing transportation to and from the protest sites.

However, one of the biggest challenges in grassroots social movements, especially anti-state movements, is the threat of state violence and oppression. This has been especially true in case of KBT, as multiple members of KBT have been jailed and subjected to state violence. Many

mutasireen have also died through trauma, violence and negligence of state due to the demolition of their homes.

Implications for Current and Future Research

Similar resistance from state is seen in other resistance efforts to development forced displacement (Oliver-Smith, 2019). This research also makes a significant contribution to that literature by showing the challenge that state violence presents to such grassroots organizations, specifically in the context of Pakistan. More research is required to understand how organizations are affected by this threat, and how to they navigate this challenge. Comparative studies may also help understand if similar challenges exist in other countries and contexts.

To challenge the state's narrative and framing, grassroots organizations turn to data and social media. KBT conducted its own research and survey of the Gujjar Nala area, which can be seen as participatory action research. They published their findings online, on their website and through social media. While academics and the community were receptive to the research by KBT, the state institutions consider it to be biased and invalid. As a result, KBT has been trying to get research conducted by a third-party organization, but that has stalled due to resource constraints.

KBT's research speaks to the importance of action research in social movements (Kemmis, 1993; Selener, 1997). The importance of counter expertise and research to challenge state narratives has been seen in other grassroots movements as well, especially those resisting development forced displacement (Oliver-Smith, 2010; Nilsen 2013). Oliver Smith (2010) talks about how grassroots social movements challenge the surveys and studies conducted by the state through their own studies, while Nilsen (2013) shows how bottom-up research develops a counter-expertise against state research using the example of Save Narmada Movement.

However, we need more advocacy of participatory research and expertise, to limit and critique the ability of state institutions to ignore grassroots research and expertise – such as in this case.

The existence of committees as subgroups and opportunity role structure has allowed KBT to become an empowering organization for its members. The same can be seen in other social movements, such as in the case of anti-highspeed railway movement in Italy's Susa Valley (Fedi et al., 2009). The study by Fedi et al. (2009) is a case study of the community empowering settings in that movement, and this study builds on similar research knowledge by understanding how social movements can empower people and deal with structural challenges.

The informal and incomplete structure of KBT allowed greater flexibility and adaptability, consistent with the literature (Caniglia and Carmin, 2005; Zapata Campos et al, 2023). However, KBT is moving towards a more formal structure, which also held true in the research around resource mobilization theory provided by Caniglia and Carmin's (2005). Formalization can help with reduction of conflict and ambiguity (Gamson, 1975; McCarthy and Zald, 1977) However, one of the biggest challenge for social movements is to find the balance between both, as formal comes with the challenge of becoming bureaucratic and goal displacement (Caniglia and Carmin, 2005).

The same tension has been seen running in other horizontal movements that disavow formal structure, such as Occupy Movement where minority groups ended up facing marginalization (Heath, 2013; Milkman, 2017). Structurelessness can mask power without formally addressing it (Freeman, 1972). As such, some social movements, such as Black Lives Matter are moving towards the idea of being “leaderful” rather than “leaderless” (Milkman, 2017). Another example of building collective leadership in an egalitarian organization can be seen in the case of Ojo con tu ojo movement (watch out for your eye movement) in Barcelona, which was able to create

a change in legislation to ban the use of rubber bullets by the police in Spain (Valls et al., 2017). Leadership is not necessarily a bad thing, but it needs to be collective and able to build local leaders (Ganz, 2009). Another strategy that KBT could employ in the future to build local leadership without manufacturing hierarchies is role rotation (Speer and Christens, 2015)

By creating a structure and moving away from a completely issue-based movement towards a mixed relationship based organizing model, KBT has the potential to embody the practices of community organizing to continue developing social power and local leadership. In community organizing, people that are affected by the problem are to be the ones to address it (Speer and Christens, 2015) which is perfectly in line with the ideology of KBT and grassroots social movements. Through community organizing practices and skill development, grassroots social movements can build and exercise social power (Christens et al., 2021; Speer and Christens, 2015).

More research is needed to understand the overlap and relationship between grassroots organizing in social movements and community organizing. As an empowering organization, KBT exhibits some traits of community organizing. Perhaps instead of the assumption that social movements move towards more formalization (Caniglia and Carmin, 2005; McCarthy and Zald 1977), we need to evaluate the potential for informal grassroots movements to evolve towards a model of community organizing and advocate for that instead.

Strengths and Limitations:

There are some weaknesses to the current study that must also be discussed. A key point to note is that because the study participants were in Pakistan and I was in U.S.A., the interviews had to be conducted online. This meant that the interview participants had to have access to a device to join from and a stable internet connection. This excluded many participants from

participating because of these requirements and skewed participant representation. However, through purposive sampling I was still able to get a good representation of gender, mutasireen, non-mutasireen and members from different committees within KBT. The purposive sampling strategy became a strength of the study which I utilized to minimize representational errors as much as I could.

However, I was having an especially hard time interviewing mutasireen women. To correct for that, I had to request help from a mutasireen member of KBT to help me conduct interviews of mutasireen women. He was able to connect me and facilitate a conversation with three women at the same time through his phone. This was not ideal, as he and another man were present off-camera in the room, providing suggestions to the women and influencing the responses I received through their presence. Future research could be done in person, and it would also help if the interviewee was also a woman to allow for a more candid conversation with mutasireen women.

The interviews with some participants, including all mutasireen, were conducted in Urdu. This meant that I had to reinterpret and translate the interviews into another language. To cut down time and effort, I used TurboScribe, a transcription and translation service based on WhisperAI. However, there were considerable errors in Urdu translation that I had to correct myself.

Mutasireen interviews were also considerably shorter than interviews of non-mutasireen, which is a trend that can be seen in Table 2. I feel that conducting the interviews online might have been a factor in this time variation, but mutasireen also generally had less time that they could provide me due to other needs and responsibilities. However, the in-depth unstructured

format of interviews still managed to provide me with considerable amount of data to conduct my analysis with.

The study also lacks field data and observations, which could have added greater depth to the study as methods of data collection. Further studies could build upon similar research questions by conducting case studies that involve field data. Consensus building practices and power relations could be better observed with observations from the field, allowing the researcher to actually observe consensus building, subcommittee structure and power relations within the organization in action.

Another challenge was that most of the mutasireen were from Kausar Niazi Colony along Gujjar Nala. There were two mutasireen, one from Liaquatabad and one from Haji Mureed Goth, but both of those settlements are also along Gujjar Nala. Gujjar Nala is not the only area with KBT's presence that is undergoing demolitions in Pakistan, but it is the one with a large majority of mutasireen that are aligned with KBT. As such, Gujjar Nala mutasireen committee is one of the more empowered and robust mutasireen committees in KBT, and talking to residents of Gujjar Nala is more likely to paint a picture of KBT as being an empowering organization. Future research could talk to groups with lesser representation in social movements to see the challenges that they face. Another point to note is that not all mutasireen are part of KBT, therefore this research only represents the experience of the mutasireen that are part of KBT. Future research could focus on affectees that do not become members of a grassroots social movement like KBT, and evaluate why they chose not to participate.

Some of the mutasireen that are not part of KBT are part of another organization, called Sindh Bachao Tehreek – which is a splinter organization formed through a split inside KBT. Before the split had formally happened, I initially tried to pitch this project as an action research

project to resolve the conflict between both sides. The people on the side that became KBT were on board with it, but I did not get clear approval from the side that became SBT. Since my research participants are only from KBT, this research is from the perspective of KBT members. Analysis of SBT's structure, and its version of events through its members would yield different interpretation and findings. Future research could collect data from SBT members, or perhaps from SBT and KBT members simultaneously. This would be a great project to create a more holistic picture of why grassroots social movements suffer fractures and the responses to these challenges.

Lastly, as mentioned in the author positionality statement, I have a personal connection with KBT as a member of the organization from 2020. I also participated in the counter research conducted by KBT that I refer to inside this thesis. This opens up the risk and possibility of bias in my research, as I could be susceptible to painting a positive picture of KBT. However, I believe that all research is subjective and that my personal connection with KBT also strengthens the research as I have a better understanding of study context and background information. It also allowed me easier access to interview participants despite being out of country, which would have been a challenge if I was not part of KBT and had no rapport – especially given the challenge of cooptation by academics that was discussed earlier.

Conclusion:

Using interview data to conduct a case study of KBT as a grassroots social movement, this study discusses the structure, power relations, empowering practices and challenges within grassroots social movements. The study shows various challenges, both internal and external, that horizontal grassroots social movements are faced with.

Internal challenges include burnout and demoralization, lack of funds, interpersonal conflicts and the development of informal hierarchies. KBT has had an informal structure, claiming to be leaderless and horizontal in nature. Resource mobilization theory contends that social movements move from being informal to increasingly formal, and this stayed true in the case of KBT. The lack of structure also led to formation of informal hierarchies, which could be dealt by establishing a formal structure.

However, incompleteness and an informal organic structure allows KBT to remain adept, flexible, and able to survive in resource scarce environment. It is challenging to come up with a balance between the two for social movements. Furthermore, KBT needs a formal structure that allows KBT to maintain its horizontalism and leaderless character with the emphasis on consensus and mutasireen empowerment.

External challenges faced by KBT include the threat and existence of cultural norms, state violence, competing responsibilities of members (such as of survival vs organizing), cooptation by other organizations and academics, lack of mainstream media coverage, and the urgency and unpredictability brought forth by Pakistani political landscape.

On the positive side, KBT has also shown various characteristics of possessing internal aspects organizational empowerment, which has led to mutasireen empowerment and increase in sense of their ownership. The importance of subgroup formation and linkages was confirmed, along with the importance of opportunity role structure and incentive management. The organization also showed equitable distribution in the first form of power, decision making. While non-mutasireen show great awareness of their privilege and guide their work with empathy, more research is required to understand the role that second and third form of power play in grassroots social movements.

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Appendixes:

A. Recruitment Script:

“Hello Friends,

I am conducting research study on KBT for my master’s degree. I want to know how KBT functions as a grassroots organization. In this regard, would anyone from the group be willing to give a 30 minute to 1 hour interview with me?

Please let me know if you want to share your opinions and experience. Because I am not in Pakistan right now, we will have to do the interview over Whatsapp or Zoom. The interviews will be confidential and I will not use your name in the paper, except if you want me to.

Furthermore, I hope that the research is also collaborative with the input from all comrades. Therefore, you can put forward any suggestion, demand or concern that you may have. My effort is to make the research beneficial for KBT as well.”

B. Interview Script

1. First some background questions: What is your connection to KBT and what committees are you a part of?
2. How would you define the organizational structure of KBT/Mutasireen committee that you are part of?
3. What are the biggest issues and challenges in community organizing? (Prompts for follow-up questions to focus on organizational approach and structure, power relations and partnerships - specifically with internal dynamics within KBT, KBT and mutasireen committee)
4. Thinking about existing interventions KBT has developed, how effective are they?
5. What factors facilitate or limit your ability to engage in community organizing the way you would like to? (If time: what are the challenges and effective strategies in community organizing in the Pakistani landscape?)
6. How do you gather information/conduct research about problems, issues and strengths? How do you disseminate your data?
 - a. If appropriate: Do you refer to any academic research [such as from a university or government agency] to gain knowledge of the issue or organizing and/or housing rights?
7. To what extent do you communicate with or collaborate with anyone from the following groups below. Why or why not, and what are some factors that facilitate collaboration or make it difficult?
 - a. Local and international government agencies,
 - b. Local and international nongovernmental organizations
 - c. Other community organizations and volunteer groups
8. Is there anything else you'd like to share on this topic? Or do you have any questions for me?
9. Those are all the questions I have. I want to thank you for your time and your valuable help with our project. Thanks again!