



# Exploring Karachi's transport system problems

A diversity of stakeholder  
perspectives

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Mansoor Raza

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*I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?*

James P. Spradley (1933–1982), Professor of Anthropology at Macalester College from 1969

Please also refer to the associated working paper 'Responding to the transport crises in Karachi' available online

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The exponential increase in Karachi's population, the change in its demographic indicators, the spatial spread of housing and the geographical concentration of livelihoods opportunities mean increasing transport pressures. This paper is a series of case studies of stakeholder perspectives on Karachi's transport problems, available online only and linked to the Working Paper 'Responding to the transport crisis in Karachi', by Arif Hasan and Mansoor Raza. Readers interested in the policy challenges of Karachi's transport system should consult both papers.

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# Acronyms

BRT	Bus rapid transit
CBD	Central business district
CDGK	City District Government Karachi
CNG	Compressed natural gas
EFI	Electronic fuel injection
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KBCA	Karachi Building Control Authority
KCR	Karachi Circular Railway rickshaws
KIBOR	<i>Karachi Inter Bank Offer Rate</i>
KMC	Karachi Metropolitan Corporation
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhawa Province
SITE	Sindh Industrial Trade Estate
URC	Urban Resource Center

## 1

# Introduction

Traffic chaos in Karachi city: gridlocked main road corridors and arteries. Pedestrians struggling to cross the fast-moving, signal-free streets. Oil tankers and cargo carriers driving in the wrong lanes. The persistent sound of high-pitched ambulance horns. Hindered VIP movements. Drivers stifling on the roads. Commuters stranded at crowded legal and illegal bus stops. And road rage is an everyday sight in the city.

Besides braving health and environmental hazards, Karachi city loses Rs 663 million (£4.07 million) collectively every day due to traffic jams and gridlocks (Khan 2014a). Various research, newspaper articles, media reports and discussions suggest that the transport issues of Karachi have linkages with demographic changes and the social and economic life of its city dwellers. These issues also partly define and dictate major decisions of a person's life which include housing and preferences for livelihoods opportunities.

In 2006, the Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020 by the then City District Government Karachi (CDGK) cited that there are 24.2 million person trips generated in Karachi every day, out of which at least 60 per cent are realised through the existing system of public transport (MPGO and CDGK 2007). It would not be unreasonable to state that with the growth of population those are bound to increase in number.

According to the website maintained by the defunct CDGK, the city population is growing at a tremendous growth rate of 5 per cent (CDGK 2010). This growth rate is attributed to the perennial rural-urban migration with an estimated 45,000 migrants coming to city every month (ibid). Moreover, according to a survey conducted in 2011, there are 2.5 million aliens in Karachi (The Express Tribune 2015) (Table 1).



Traffic jam at Garden Road, Lasbela, Karachi  
© Faisal Imran

Table 1. Per annum growth rates in Karachi, 1941–1998

YEAR	PER ANNUM GROWTH %
1941–1951	11.50
1951–1961	6.05
1961–1972	5.00
1972–1981	4.96
1981–1998	3.52

Source: Hasan and Mohib 2003

The estimated current population by various institutions is estimated as more than 20 million (CDGK 2010). The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (UNDESA) puts urban Karachi as twelfth most populous urban centre in the world (<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2014-Report.pdf>). In 1990 Karachi had occupied the 22nd position and by 2030 it is projected to be seventh most populous city of the world (<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2014-Report.pdf>). It is important to note that the UNDESA estimates were made on a growth rate of 3.3 per cent (<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2014-Report.pdf>) which is low compared to CDGK estimates; 5 percent (CDGK 2010).

Table 2. Increase in Karachi's population over the last 150 years

YEAR	URBAN POPULATION
1856	56,875
1872	56,753
1881	73,560
1891	105,199
1901	136,297
1911	186,771
1921	244,162
1931	300,799
1941	435,887
1951	1,068,459
1961	1,912,598
1972	3,426,310
1981	5,208,132
1998	9,269,265
2006	13,969,284
2007	14,500,000

Source: CDGK (2010). (<http://14.192.147.139/cdgk/Home/AboutKarachi/GeographyDemography/tabid/270/Default.aspx>)

Table 2 highlights the staggering growth patterns of Karachi. The population added to city between the census periods of 1951 and 1981 over 30 years is 4.139 million which is almost same as the total pollution added between the census period of 1981 and 1998: in 17 years the addition is 4.06 million, with a mere difference of 79,000. Statistics from the census reports tells that in 1951 for every male there were 3.2 Females, and in 1998 for every male there were 1.16 Females, so the gender gap is narrowing (Raza 2014).

The spatial distribution and spread of livelihood opportunities for a city of more than 20 million is strongly correlated with the health of its transport system. To give an idea of the geo-concentration of employment opportunities in the city, 56 per cent of employment in manufacturing is in the Sindh Industrial Trade Estate (SITE) area and Landhi and Korangi industrial areas. More than 80 per cent of business services are located in central area. Further, 50 per cent of the employment in wholesale and transport is in the central area. Trip lengths are in the range of 20–40km for working-class commuters. Moreover, Karachi has to generate 3.5 million jobs at every five-year interval for the rapid population growth (MPGO and CDGK 2007).

Karachi has an area of 3,527  $km^2$  (almost four times larger than Hong Kong) and low-income groups constitute 68 per cent of Karachi's population. Density is 6,000 people per square kilometre. Between 1998 and 2011, the average household size has increased by 6.7 persons to 7.3 persons. This increase is due to the shortage of housing and not to an increase in fertility rates (Hasan, undated and Daily Times 2014). Eight-eight per cent of houses are built on 120 square yards or less. Only 2 per cent of total houses are built on 400–800 square yards and they occupy 21 per cent of the total 36 per cent of the residential land of Karachi (Raza 2014).

Living on the city's periphery means increased transportation costs, associated discomfort and time spent commuting. It also means that women who have to look after families have to forego certain job opportunities as they cannot afford to commute for longer hours. According to the Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020 survey (MPGO and CDGK 2007), 89 per cent of families in Karachi are nuclear whereas the 1989 survey showed the same indicator at 54 per cent. The family institution is in transition fuelled by the desire to educate their children, be independent of in-laws, for different lifestyles and upward social mobility by immediate family members. Affordability, security and availability of transport to commute to places of work and education dictate the choice of residence for couples moving out of their in-laws' home.



All the above-mentioned facts boil down to one simple question: does Karachi's transport sector have the capacity to cater to these changing realities? As per data collected by Urban Resource Center (URC 2014), in 2011 the number of registered vehicles in Karachi was 2.6 million. According to a news report by *Pakistan Today* in 2014, a massive 900 new vehicles are registered on daily basis.<sup>1</sup> The total number of vehicles registered in Karachi is 3.3 million (Pakistan Today 2014).

Table 3 indicates that public transport (including para-transport) accounts for only 7 per cent of the total number of registered vehicles. Individual vehicle ownership dominates, as motorcycles and cars cumulatively accrue to 88 per cent of registered vehicles. 'Others' include trucks, lifters, ambulances and oil tankers etc. It is also evident that from 1998 to 2011 the number of buses has been reduced to 65 per cent over 13 years. A press report claims that in the year 2000, 140 new mini-bus routes were approved, out of which only 60–65 are operational. Also in 2000, 60 routes for buses were approved but only 20 are operational. No new investments are being made by

transport companies and many vehicles are 20 to 60 years old (Pakistan Today 2014).

Table 3. Registered vehicles in Karachi, 2011

TYPES OF VEHICLE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Mini-buses	15,807 (8,773 in 1998)	0.60%
Buses	6,506 (14,854 in 1998)	0.25%
Taxi	47,165 (13,613 in 1998)	1.80%
Rickshaw	105,684 (23,337 in 1998)	4.04%
Motorcycles	1,296,481	49.59%
Cars	998,920	38.21%
Others	144,017	5.51%
Total*	2,614,580	100.00%

Source: Raza 2014

## BOX 1. FEATURES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Different types of public transport are available in Karachi to commute within city. These include car taxis and auto rickshaws, big buses, mini-buses and chingchis [qingqis].<sup>2</sup> Big buses, mini-buses and chingchis charge per passenger basis while taxis and auto rickshaws are privately hired and charge per tip. Big buses and mini-buses have two sections where the women's section is in the front and men's section in the back. Both of these sections have separate doors; the front door is for entry and exit into women's section while the back door for entry and exit into men's section. Though the two sections are partitioned, usually there is a gap or opening from inside the bus that allows movement between the two sections. Mini-buses cover greater number of routes compared to big buses and, thus, people largely use mini-buses to travel.

These (mini) buses have a seating capacity of 25 persons, of which seven are in women's section. As a result, women often have to sit on the engine, which is next to the driver's seat. At times, the driver's hand touches the female passenger's knee, intentionally or unintentionally, while changing gears. Also, they have to sit on the space at the back of driver's seat facing men's section. Being small, mini-buses have less space for people to stand; women's section has

a capacity of four and men's section has a capacity of eight to ten people to stand. Given that mini-buses have greater number of routes and less capacity to accommodate people, these buses are generally found overloaded where men travel even by sitting on roof top. When the men's section is full, they also occupy part of the women's section and women have to share their section with the men.

Chingchi is a modified form of Auto Rickshaw. It has different forms, having a capacity to carry six to eleven passengers. One form of chingchi has three seats where three passengers can sit on one seat. Hence, it has a capacity to accommodate nine passengers. Two seats are facing each other while one seat faces backwards. There are no reserved seats for women and men. Social norms dictate that only a woman can sit beside another woman however women and men can sit on seats facing each other. Auto rickshaws have a capacity to carry three persons and are privately hired. They are relatively more expensive as the passenger has to pay the entire cost of the trip. Car taxis are even more expensive and seldom used by the lower middle class and almost never by the poor.

Extract from ADB (2014).

<sup>1</sup> One respondents interviewed for this working paper, however, mentioned the number as 400. See Section 3.14.

<sup>2</sup> A qingqi or chingchi is a type of motorcycle rickshaw popularly used as public transport in Pakistan.

## 1.1 Objectives

The purpose of this working paper is to provide additional case-study material to accompany another IIED working paper on transport issues in Karachi (Hasan and Raza, 2015) which presents the genesis of the transport crisis and its impact on various stakeholders. The present working paper aims to understand these traffic issues and their impact by exploring the diverse perspectives those who travel on Karachi's road, from mini-bus, rickshaw and ambulance drivers to mechanics, spare-parts dealers and commuters. It is assumed that these respondents have a deeper understanding of the issues that define transport and traffic management in Karachi.

## 1.2 Methodology

Twenty-three interviews were conducted with a diverse range of relevant stakeholders. Their perceptions about the transport and traffic problems are documented here (Appendix 1). The interviews were conducted over 1,080 hours at different locations of Karachi: North Nazimabad in District Central, Pakistan Employees Cooperative Housing Society (PECHS), Clifton and Saddar in District South and Orangi Town in District West Karachi. Respondents include one female and twenty males.

The data for this study is qualitative. Except for one, all the interviews were conducted between June and October 2015. The interviews took place in both formal and informal settings – in offices and on the streets and footpaths. Before the interviews took place, the objectives of the study were explained to the respondents as a requirement of research ethics. For convenience, a “snowball” sampling method was applied where one interviewee led to the next one.

The checklist for the interviews was comprised of two parts. Part A consisted of essential questions which captured a brief profile of the interviewees and the history behind their particular occupations (see Appendix 2). This set the tone for Part B, a detailed interview, and a justification to further investigate the respondents' perceptions of transport issues in Karachi.

To triangulate the findings, perceptions of one type of stakeholder about another type of stakeholder were crosschecked against the other. At the start of the interview, a brief personality sketch of the respondent was outlined. Afterwards, the initial information given by the respondents defined the question asked.

## 1.3 Challenges

June 2015 was devastating for Karachiites. A sudden heat wave killed around 1,200 people (BBC News 2015). Finding willing respondents in the chaos proved difficult so work on the study stalled. The Karachi heatwave coincided with the month of fasting (Ramadan). The availability of would-be respondents was next to impossible as people tended to focus more on religious rituals while working hours were also reduced.

Besides this, a number of working hours were wasted attempting to find people willing to be interviewed. Often, an entire day proved unproductive simply because of the unwillingness of people to talk on the subject. For instance, due to recent administrative actions against water tankers, the drivers were wary of giving interviews. With much difficulty, an interview with a water tanker was finally arranged – on Eid day.

## 1.4 Structure of the working paper

This report is organised into four sections. Section 1 states the objectives of the research, its methodology, challenges and other relevant aspects. Section 2 synthesises the findings from the field interviews and provides a brief secondary literature review. Section 3 gives in-brief case studies extracted from the twenty-three interviews. Section 4 provides conclusions and recommendations, posing simple questions to the planners and policy makers of the Karachi City.

*Let me run over the principal steps. We approached the case, you remember, with an absolutely blank mind, which is always an advantage. We had formed no theories. We were simply there to observe and to draw inferences from our observations.*

*Conan Doyle (1892)*



# 2

## Stakeholder perceptions: the findings

This section presents a summary of the major findings of the study that relate to the perceptions of various stakeholders of the transport system and associated facilities and services of Karachi. Drawing on qualitative results it considers how urban stakeholders confront common challenges of everyday life in ways that shape their relationships with the transport circuit. The specific findings are outlined in Table 4 below.

### 2.1 Modes of transport

#### 2.1.1 Buses and mini-buses

According to the respondents, although congested, buses are perceived as spacious in comparison with mini-buses: 'I had to use 7C [route number of a bus] as well. The advantage of the bus is that it is spacious [...] The other disadvantage of a mini-bus is that the passengers' clothes get dirty and crumpled. The little space forces passengers to lean against each other or

the walls and seats of the bus. Also, because of the lack of space, passengers belonging to certain professions like mechanics and plumbers also left their marks on one's dress'.<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned above, over a span of 13 years there has been a 65 per cent reduction in the number of buses. The respondents cited various reasons included the rising cost of spare parts.<sup>4</sup> Another reason is that bus fares are considered insufficient which makes bus operation less lucrative.

*The fares are on the lower side. The distance from New Karachi to Kemari is 35km and the fare is Rs17–18.<sup>5</sup> In Kashmir, the fare for 10km is Rs150 and one has to pay extra Rs50 for the bag pack. In Faisalabad for a distance of 35km, Rs100 (£0.61) is charged.<sup>6</sup>*

The reduction in the number of buses has an impact on affiliate businesses as well. 'If the number of buses is becoming less then our businesses also are affected'<sup>7</sup> mentioned a mechanic.

<sup>3</sup> See Section 3.7.

<sup>4</sup> See Section 3.9.

<sup>5</sup> 150 Pakistan rupees equal approximately £1.00.

<sup>6</sup> See Section 3.9.

<sup>7</sup> See Section 3.9.

Table 4. Major findings: stakeholder perceptions of Karachi's transport system

THEME	PERCEPTIONS
Modes of transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Buses/mini-buses: buses are preferred to mini-buses but the former are disappearing as they are becoming increasingly economically unfeasible.</li> <li>▪ Motorbikes are becoming more and more popular but they are a nuisance as well.</li> <li>▪ Qingqis are more attractive to low-income groups but a source of irritation to car owners.</li> <li>▪ CNG rickshaws are more lucrative for owners than the petrol-driven rickshaws. They are also more environmentally friendly, but only if well maintained.</li> <li>▪ Peddle power – ie the use of bicycles – has become less popular.</li> </ul>
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor infrastructure encourages traffic to flow in the wrong direction.</li> <li>▪ Bus and mini-bus drivers rarely stop at designated bus stops.</li> <li>▪ Signal-free corridors have promoted speeding and are running out of capacity.</li> <li>▪ Pedestrian bridges are mostly underutilised.</li> </ul>
Reasons for traffic congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The increase in traffic volume due to irresponsible lending by banks.</li> <li>▪ Ill-planned infrastructure.</li> <li>▪ Unplanned and uninformed rallies and protests.</li> <li>▪ Violation of traffic laws.</li> <li>▪ Ageing vehicles block the roads.</li> </ul>
Parking space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Escalating land prices discourage the creation of additional parking space in the city.</li> <li>▪ There are no designated parking spaces for roadside mechanics and other relevant service providers' vehicles, forcing them to park on the roads.</li> <li>▪ Unchecked illegal parking creates disruption in traffic flow.</li> </ul>
Lack of availability of vehicle parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Smuggled vehicle parts have flooded the markets, suffocating trade in legally imported parts.</li> <li>▪ Devaluation of the rupee against the yen has caused an inflation in prices and popularised the use of 'kabuli' (used vehicle parts).<sup>8</sup></li> <li>▪ Trade in salvaged vehicle parts is not officially recognised but does make spare parts affordable.</li> </ul>
Role of the police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is endemic corruption within the Karachi police force.</li> <li>▪ The costs of bribes are arbitrary; there are no fixed rates.</li> <li>▪ Instead of educating the public about the law, police personnel prefer to exploit the ignorance for monetary gain.</li> </ul>
Obtaining documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Except for vehicle registration certificates, most vehicle documents can be obtained with ease by bribing the relevant personnel.</li> <li>▪ As a result, the validity of such documents is lost in the eyes of the public.</li> </ul>
Health and the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Spending a lot of time travelling on Karachi's roads results in altered psychology and physical illness.</li> <li>▪ Besides affecting health, the loss in environmental quality has financial repercussions as well.</li> </ul>
Gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public transport systems are failing to respond to the changing status of women.</li> <li>▪ Harassment is an everyday occurrence for women in public spheres.</li> </ul>
Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The ease of access to car loans has made drivers more careless.</li> </ul>
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High levels of street crime put the lives of commuters at risk.</li> <li>▪ Transport operators are wary of going to some areas after dark, thus making life difficult for commuters.</li> </ul>
Causes of accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of respect for the law.</li> <li>▪ Lack of sleep of drivers on highways.</li> <li>▪ Delays due to traffic congestion encourage drivers to speed elsewhere to make up for time lost. This causes further accidents and in turn more traffic jams: a vicious circle.</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup>'Kabuli' (ie imported from Kabul in Afghanistan) here refers to second-hand spare parts for vehicles.



A typical bus on Karachi's roads © Faisal Imran

Few new investments are made in buses but the table above shows a 44 per cent increase in the number of mini-buses in Karachi over 13 years. According to one respondent:

*[T]he cost of a vehicle has also increased. In 2003 when a Mazda (mini-bus)<sup>9</sup> was assembled here the cost was Rs350,000 [approximately £2,150]. The entire production has been shifted to India and now a vehicle costs Rs1.4 million [approximately £8,600]. It's difficult to get a zero-meter Mazda these days and the Chinese vehicles are not so powerful to take a load and could not ply on Karachi roads for long.<sup>10</sup>*

Had this price hike not happened, the number of mini-buses would have been more. 'W-11 [a mini-bus route number] used to have 450 mini-buses and now it has 150–170 mini-buses. Earlier, 2–3 mini-buses departed from the terminal per minute and now one bus leaves the *adda* [terminal] every 2 minutes.'<sup>11</sup>

### 2.1.2 Motorcycles

In 1990 Karachi city had 450,000 registered motorcycles; in 2004 it had 500,000; one million in 2010 and according to a press report, in the year 2015 Karachi had 1.849 million motorcycles (Business Recorder 2015). It is estimated that by 2030, there will be 115 bikes for every 1,000 people (Hasan and Raza 2011).

The reasons for the popularity of bikes are simple to understand. They are economical, save time and provide freedom to the rider. A bike is a cheaper means of travel than public transport (Hasan and Raza 2011). A biker spends on average Rs784 (£4.81) per month on

maintenance while a bus commuter spends on average Rs1,570 (£9.61) per month (Hasan and Raza 2011). As per one respondent of this study, 'That [having a motorcycle] would be of great advantage as it would save time, money and will give me a sense of freedom and I can manoeuvre the route according to the law and order situation of the city and my needs'.<sup>12</sup>

However, oil- and water-tanker drivers do not perceive motorcyclists favourably, who are considered by the respondents to be careless and less law-abiding. 'I am sick of bike riders. They don't have any idea how difficult and dangerous it is to apply the brakes with a fully loaded vehicle.'<sup>13</sup> Similar views were expressed by another respondent. 'Firstly, bikers and qingqis are big nuisances. They overtake us narrowly and often from the wrong side. These drivers have no idea that we cannot apply brakes abruptly as it would overturn the truck.'<sup>14</sup>

On the pretext of law and order, a ban on pillion-riding is often enforced with fines by the traffic police (Khan 2015c). However genuine their reasons may be, the move is not appreciated by motorcyclists. Apart from financial reasons for disliking this, of fine payments and loss of benefit to shared costs where the ride is shared, there are other pragmatic reasons 'Not beneficial from my point of view. While carrying heavy items like a TV or bulk grocery, I need somebody to accompany me: to carry and to hold those items.'<sup>15</sup>

### 2.1.3 Qingqis

There are almost 60,000 unregistered qingqi rickshaws in the city (Shahbazi 2015). In 2012 it was estimated that qingqis generated a revenue of Rs2–2.5

<sup>9</sup> Mini-buses in Karachi are popularly called 'mazdas'.

<sup>10</sup> See Section 3.9.

<sup>11</sup> See Section 3.9.

<sup>12</sup> See Section 3.7.

<sup>13</sup> See Section 3.21.

<sup>14</sup> See Section 3.20.

<sup>15</sup> See Section 3.12.

million (approximately £12,275–15,350) in a day by transporting approximately 250,000 passengers (Raza 2015). It is a popular form of transport in low- and low to middle-income groups. The respondents of this study provided a mixed bag of perceptions of this unregistered but effective mode of conveyance. 'They are cheap and moreover they also ply on routes where buses and even mini-buses are not operative.'<sup>16</sup>

However, the traffic managers of the city are not happy with the qingqi drivers. They are accused of not following the law and being the main source of traffic jams. 'Qingqis are a problem. Moving against the traffic flow the wrong way is another problem.'<sup>17</sup>

In April 2015, the Supreme Court issued directives banning qingqis (Siddiqui 2015). While it seems that this has helped to improve the flow of traffic at some points in Karachi it has also brought suffering to women, students and working-class commuters.

*Qingqis are beneficial for the poor but they are the biggest impediment of smooth driving. They drive slowly, off the extreme-right lanes, always overloaded and run by inexperienced and young drivers. You can see that how the ban on qingqis has improved, though little, the traffic situation in Karachi. The business of coaches and vans has increased due to the ban and they get most out of the ban.'*<sup>18</sup>

It is also a perception that administrative measures are biased and only the operators of qingqis are targeted while the other actors in the qingqi chain are spared. 'If the administration does not want qingqis, why have they allowed them to be manufactured in the very first place? The assemblers should be nabbed, the marketers should be grabbed and those police officers who allowed qingqis to ply the road need to be taken to task.'<sup>19</sup>

#### 2.1.4 CNG rickshaw

The KCR rickshaw<sup>20</sup> (the predecessor of the CNG rickshaw) was considered to be a more robust vehicle with greater engine power and hence seldom accused of slowing down traffic. But they were not environmentally friendly and less lucrative: they could sit only three people and with difficulty. In contrast, a CNG rickshaw can be used for six passengers (with a little modification). One respondent said 'CNG rickshaws are obviously more profitable. A CNG rickshaw owner can earn up to Rs1,400 [approximately £8.60] a day. In contrast, a KCR rickshaw driver can earn a maximum of Rs500 [approximately £3.00] per day. It's because of the ever-escalating price of petrol.'<sup>21</sup>

Because of the increased availability of space, CNG rickshaws have been evolved for diverse uses. For instance, in low-income localities, CNG rickshaws are hired to participate in marriage ceremonies by a group of people.



CNG rickshaws in Karachi  
© Faisal Imran

<sup>16</sup> See Section 3.7.

<sup>17</sup> See Section 3.5.

<sup>18</sup> See Section 3.16.

<sup>19</sup> See Section 3.19.

<sup>20</sup> Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) rickshaws are two-stroke engine rickshaws which use petrol instead of CNG as fuel.

<sup>21</sup> See Section 3.3.



*It is used for marriage ceremonies as well. It is cheaper for a family of six or seven persons. And it also happens that three or four families book three to four CNG rickshaws to go to a relative's marriage, together. It's more economical than using a coaster [type of bus] for the same purpose.<sup>22</sup>*

In 2012, the number of CNG rickshaws reported in Karachi was 60,000 (The News International 2012). CNG rickshaw have a long life as compared to KCRs but spare parts are expensive. 'KCR's engine can be completely overhauled with Rs5,000 [approximately £30] while for CNG it takes Rs10,000 [approximately £60] to do complete overhauling.'<sup>23</sup>

The CNG rickshaw driver interviewed for this study was aware of the fact that car drivers are not happy with CNG drivers but he had a justification for the slow-moving vehicle.

*We also get irritated with them. They honk, push us into speeding unnecessarily, throw tantrums, hurl abuse and always have dirty looks for us. They need to understand that we cannot speed because of load and also because of the fact we cannot apply breaks suddenly. The rickshaw will get topsy-turvy. However, the new-generation CNG rickshaws are better than their predecessor, as they have disc brakes as earlier the rickshaws had washer brakes. The sudden application of breaks, in that case, tore apart the washer.<sup>24</sup>*

### 2.1.5 Peddle power: cyclists

Over the years in Karachi, the trend of cycling has succumbed to the ways of a modern city. Consumer aspirations have led to more and more cars and motorcycles on the road instead. In recent years, the development of road infrastructure has remained insensitive to the requirements of cyclists. The lack of maintenance of the existing infrastructure is also a discouraging factor for cyclists.

*Roads are in bad condition. Pot holes are damaging for cycles and cause backache. Because of haphazard traffic and irregular parking, I, to make my way, always criss-cross the cycle. We are sick of qingqis; they don't know how to use the road.<sup>25</sup>*

The popularity of motorcycles due to the easy availability of credit and withdrawal of subsidies for the production of bicycles is cited as one reason for the decline of interest in cycling (Hussain 2011). The discouraging attitude of police officers is also cited as a reason. According to one group of respondents, 'How can cyclists be a nuisance to other vehicles or create traffic problems? It could be otherwise. Those police cops just want to extort money from us on the pretext of not having a light on the bicycle or a bell.'<sup>26</sup>

There are no separate cycle lanes to make Karachi a bicycle-friendly city. Neither the long flyovers nor the traffic signal-free corridors – the new architecture of roads – are helping the culture of cycling. 'We cannot take u-turns and we have to avoid speeding cars. It's also tiring to have to weave in and out of the traffic.'<sup>27</sup>

## 2.2 Infrastructure

### 2.2.1 Flyovers

For approximately 2.6 million vehicles, Karachi has a road network of 9,764km (MPGO and CDGK 2007). There are 42 flyovers and under passes (URC 2015a; see also Appendix 3) but according to the taxi driver interviewed, 'Those [vehicular flyovers] do not help us. Everybody comes from the wrong side and we, to save petrol or CNG, do the same. It is so much in vogue that even at some places the police facilitate that movement [...] due to ever-increasing number of vehicles on the road those infrastructures will soon run out of space.'<sup>28</sup> However, another respondent thinks otherwise: 'Those underpasses and flyovers are helpful as they reduce the time of commuting over long distances.'<sup>29</sup>

### 2.2.2 Bus stops

In Karachi, a bus can be stopped anywhere by a commuter although the city has designated bus stops as well. Mini-buses usually drop passengers in the middle of the road and at the entry and exit points of flyovers and underpasses. Bus-stop culture is almost non-existent. Designated bus-stops do not have any names displayed on them. A conductor must shout the name of the bus stop to announce the destination or describe the route. 'No, we are not dropped by the bus drivers on designated bus-stops as they usually drop us on the roads.'<sup>30</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See Section 3.19.

<sup>23</sup> See Section 3.19.

<sup>24</sup> See Section 3.19.

<sup>25</sup> See Section 3.13.

<sup>26</sup> See Section 3.13.

<sup>27</sup> See Section 3.13.

<sup>28</sup> See Section 3.1.

<sup>29</sup> See Section 3.14.

<sup>30</sup> See Section 3.7.

### 2.2.3 Freeways/signal-free corridors

The respondents blame signal-free corridors for speeding, encouraging drivers to break the law, and discouraging the use of bicycles. These stretches of road have promoted speeding and are a problem for motorcyclists. Due to the signal-free fast-track roads, there are a few opportunities for motorcyclists to make u-turns and many violate the one-way rule, which proves dangerous. 'This is just to save time and fuel by avoiding distant u-turn areas. I myself violate the rules and move opposite to the one-ways and mainstream traffic. Before the construction of those speedy lanes, that was not the case.'<sup>31</sup>

Signal-free corridors are accused of promoting a culture of recklessness in drivers as well. One of the respondents, a police officer, however, thinks that observing traffic discipline is more important. 'It's not a matter of corridors being signal free or with signals. It's just a matter of observing the discipline of traffic and to pay respect to the law of the land. However, I do believe that there isn't enough capacity of the roads to absorb the ever-increasing volume of vehicles.'<sup>32</sup>

### 2.2.4 Pedestrian bridges

Karachi's road corridors and arteries are crossed, albeit insufficiently, by pedestrian bridges. They were installed to enable foot travellers to cross roads safely, in less time and with less effort, particularly at signal-free corridors. Yet Karachi – a city of over 20 million people – has only 93 pedestrian bridges (URC 2015b). In addition, pedestrian bridges are difficult for the elderly and incapacitated to use, while the long distances between any two bridges is problematic for many pedestrians (see Table 5).

According to a 'walkability' survey in 2009, in Karachi almost 21 per cent of daily trips are made entirely on foot, and of the nearly 66 per cent of the commuters who use different modes of public transport, a large percentage walk part of their daily commute. Every trip begins and ends with a walking trip, either to the destination or to another mode of transport (The News International 2009). One respondent outlined some of the difficulties of walking:

Table 5. Examples of distances between pedestrian bridges

S. NO	SPOT	DISTANCE
SHAHRAH-E-FAISAL		
1	Nursery to Lal Kothi	1 km
2	Lal Kothi to Fortune Centre	1 km
3	Fortune Centre to Tipu Sultan	0.7 km
4	Day Inn to Tipu Sultan	1.2 km
5	Awami Markaz to Day Inn	0.6 km
6	Awami Markaz to Karsaz	0.8 km
EXPRESS WAY		
1	Qayyumabad to Iqra University	1 km
2	Iqra University to Eidgah	1 km
3	Eidgah to Gujjar Chowk	1 km
4	Gujjar Chowk to Shaheed-e-Millat	3 km

Source: URC 2015b

<sup>31</sup> See Section 3.12.

<sup>32</sup> See Section 3.5.



*Open manholes, lack of footpaths, dilapidated roads, mud in monsoons, street crimes, rash behaviour of motorcyclists and speeding cars are a few of the many problems faced by me and many other pedestrians.*<sup>33</sup>

The female respondent also highlighted the difficulties of reaching public transport including that 'whatever footpaths are available are used by motorcyclists.'<sup>34</sup>

## 2.3 Causes of traffic jams

Some respondents said that the increase in traffic volumes is the major cause of congestion and traffic jams. 'The volume of traffic has increased. To the best of my knowledge a staggering number of 400 vehicles are registered per day at Civic Centre. Now, you multiply it by 300 working days of a year, so an additional 120,000 vehicles per annum are on the roads of Karachi.'<sup>35</sup>

Others mentioned that CNG rickshaws and qingqis are also responsible for traffic jams. 'Earlier the traffic on the roads was less, now it's a hell of a lot of traffic. Besides the ever increasing number of cars, qingqis are part of problem. They stop anywhere without considering the traffic behind them, make two-to-three parallel lanes, and bikers have to zigzag between them to make their way. Mini-buses have the same problem: stop anywhere, are driven like airplanes and never stop at designated bus stops.'<sup>36</sup>

Lending by banks – perceived by many as reckless – has caused an increase the traffic volume. It is also perceived that the ease of buying personal cars has caused consumers to behave irresponsibly.

*Traffic volume has increased a lot and it's because of the increase in population and also because of the relative ease of purchasing cars due to bank loans. I also find people are becoming more careless about speeding and driving more rashly, compared to before.*<sup>37</sup>

However, one respondent, the bank manager, had a different opinion about whether or not bank lending was reckless:

*I don't think so. These are just because of improper planning for infrastructure and due to the poor maintenance of whatever roads we have. It's not banks that caused the traffic issues of Karachi. It's the mafias that did it and it's the attitude of the public: neither wants to observe the laws [...] This is the [fault of the] goods-carrier mafia that failed the cargo-carrying services of Pakistan Railways [...] Earlier, 75 per cent of goods were transported through Pakistan Railways. Transporting goods by rail was much cheaper than trucks, which are a source of traffic jams.*<sup>38</sup>

It was also mentioned that the flow of traffic is severely affected by public rallies and political activism. According to the ambulance driver interviewed 'The rallies, protests and *dharnas* [sit-ins] are real challenges for us. When every second counts it takes us considerable time to find our way. Rallies are a bit of an exception as usually alternative routes are predefined by the authorities, but it increases the time to reach the hospital.'<sup>39</sup>

Heavy transport vehicles (HTVs) driving in undesignated lanes also contribute to creating long queues of vehicles behind them and forcing other drivers to change lanes. According to the oil-tanker driver interviewed:

*Admittedly, we have our own follies. We drive on the extreme right which is supposed to be a fast lane, which we shouldn't be doing [...] As a result, we block the way for ambulances or other fast-moving vehicles. This practice is more common with newcomers to our profession who don't know the laws and ethics of driving.*<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See Section 3.7.

<sup>34</sup> See Section 3.8.

<sup>35</sup> See Section 3.14.

<sup>36</sup> See Section 3.12.

<sup>37</sup> See Section 3.16.

<sup>38</sup> See Section 3.15.

<sup>39</sup> See Section 3.18.

<sup>40</sup> See Section 3.20.

## 2.4 Parking problems

One cause of Karachi's traffic jams is the lack of allocated parking spaces in areas with high-density populations. Many drivers park their vehicles horizontally on the road, on elevated pedestrian pathways, beside other parked cars or on designated bus stops. To tackle these illegal parking practices, in 2014 the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) created 57 official charged parking sites. The move also aimed to prevent mafia groups from overcharging drivers for parking (Khan 2014b).

The lack of allocated parking spaces for newly built structures is directly correlated with the escalating prices of land. Some interviewees mentioned that in order to maximise profits, a substantial number of builders circumvent building control regulations: while new building plans include space for vehicular parking, the builders will often sell the space on, or use it to build more dwellings instead. 'Have you ever observed that all those newly constructed shopping malls and housing complexes do not provide enough space for parking? As a result, people have occupied [parked] streets and lanes in the city.'<sup>41</sup>

Three new bus terminals were supposed to be built in Karachi but so far only one has been constructed, Yousuf Goth at the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) Highway. As a result, hundreds of illegal bus terminals have appeared, most in District South in Saddar and near the Karachi Cantonment

railway station. According the intercity bus terminal manager interviewed 30 per cent of the traffic problems in District South could be resolved by addressing this issue (PPI News Agency 2013).

*Nowadays, the police have tightened controls so we park under the Saddar Bridge. This gives us only 10 minutes to ask passengers to get onto the bus. We have been asked to abolish the addas [terminal] we have in the city. The new terminal at Sabzi Mandi is too far from the city and is not viable for most of our potential passengers. On the other hand, the private terminal at the same place is very expensive and we cannot afford to use it. I think that there should be a terminal at Cantonment Station as well.'*<sup>42</sup>

Vendors and service providers also suffer financially from the lack of parking provision. The respondents said that had they been provided with proper parking space, they would have better business prospects. According to one mechanic interviewed, 'Parking is a major problem. We don't have a proper space where we can ask our clients to park their cars. As a result, we park on roads, designated footpaths and on street corners. If I had properly allocated parking, my business would increase.'<sup>43</sup>

The commercial goods' carrier also complained of the lack of parking space and the resulting operational impediments. 'It's the congestion on the streets which bothers us. It's difficult to operate on the ever-filled streets of Tariq Road, Liaquatabad, Nazimabad and the



An illegally parked car being removed by officials  
© Faisal Imran

<sup>41</sup> See Section 3.5.

<sup>42</sup> See Section 3.6.

<sup>43</sup> See Section 3.16.

old city areas. We have to wait as people are not willing to provide us with space. Also, parking is not available in most area.<sup>144</sup>

Although the KMC has allocated new parking spaces there is a perceived element of unfairness. According to one interviewee, the designated charged parking space outside government hospitals irritates patients and their relatives (Healthwatch 2015). The ambulance driver also complained about the same issue but in a different context. 'Civil Hospital is the most difficult of the three major hospitals: Abbasi, Jinnah and Civil. One cannot turn around the ambulance as there isn't enough space to manoeuvre the vehicle and it's because of systematic and sporadic parking, primarily because of para-transport vehicles.'<sup>145</sup>

The drivers of water bowzers often park illegally. In the absence of any proper arrangements, they often park close to their dwellings. 'I live in Hijart Colony, and I park the vehicle nearby to my place. Actually, it's not only me but other truck drivers also park. So we pool money for a *chowkidar* [guard] who takes care of all the vehicles that are parked there.'<sup>146</sup>

The issue of illegal parking also affects the rescue and emergency services. Gridlock at main road arteries also results in the loss of lives. In the first two months of 2006, as many as 500 people died on their way to hospital as emergency services were not able to make their way to the hospitals (Dawn 2006). 'See the road at Golimar and you will see how sanitary shops and the loader pickups and trucks have occupied half of the road.'<sup>147</sup>

The unprecedented number of new schools appearing in otherwise residential blocks means there are not enough parking spaces for those taking children to and from school. There are more than seven hundred schools in Karachi (ILM 2015) and the majority of those do not have enough parking. 'Schools are also responsible for the traffic jams. Very few schools have proper parking. Just visit the Plaza around 1.00pm when school finishes and you will understand why.'<sup>148</sup>

## 2.5 Problems related to vehicle parts

According to a press report, Pakistan suffers annual losses of Rs10.3 billion (£63.2 million) in tax revenues due to smuggling, counterfeiting and import duty evasion due to dishonest declarations and under invoicing for automobile spare parts. The applicable tax range on the import of vehicle parts varies from 32.5 per cent to 50 per cent. As per estimates for 2012 by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) goods worth Rs170 billion (£1.04 billion) are smuggled through Afghan Transit Trade (ATI) each year (Legal Advice Pakistan 2012). According to the vehicle parts dealer interviewed:

*Afghans spoiled the business. They used drug money to finance the business of spare parts. They smuggled items through Torkham border and bulldozed all the legal requirements. On the other hand we are bound to pay taxes, custom duties, to wait for custom clearances and sometimes have to pay demurrages as well. They [Afghans] have money and they invest enormously in local markets. They sell spare parts much cheaper than us; we are rendered expensive to the end user. Afghans through their contacts have developed local networks and we because of our legal status are out of that circuit.'*<sup>149</sup>

Besides illegally imported new spare parts, second-hand used spare parts popularly known as 'kabuli' are also available. Interviewees claimed confidentially that it is common knowledge that spare vehicle parts are often sourced from stolen vehicles. In 2013 alone 26,352 cases of vehicle theft were reported (Khan and Ashraf 2014).

There is also a large trade in 'taxi-cutting' taking place in Manghopir and Katti Pahari (in District West of Karachi). Scrap dealers buy old taxis for Rs 45,000–50,000 (£275–300) each, take out the spare parts and scrap the rest. According to one taxi driver, 'those cab drivers who are running out of the business sell their taxis to Pathans [the Pashtun people]. The spare parts and anything useful are sold out as *kabuli* and the rest to iron scrappers.'<sup>150</sup>

<sup>144</sup> See Section 3.17.

<sup>145</sup> See Section 3.18.

<sup>146</sup> See Section 3.21.

<sup>147</sup> See Section 3.18.

<sup>148</sup> See Section 3.11.

<sup>149</sup> See Section 3.11.

<sup>150</sup> See Section 3.1.





A vehicle spare-parts shop in Karachi © Faisal Imran

Second-hand parts are also in demand due to a change in working styles of mechanics. He explains to me how the repair business has changed with these developments. 'Earlier, the *ustad* was interested in making repairs. Now the emphasis is more on the replacement of old or damaged parts because both the customer and the mechanic do not have time for meticulous work. It is also because of the fact that after replacing a part, the life of the car increases, and thirdly, people can now order parts from Dubai as well. We also have upgraded tools at our disposal so we are more comfortable with the variety of spare parts. For instance, we now use oil filter spanner instead of chain sprocket to change the oil filter,' he says.<sup>51</sup>

Trade in illegal scrapping and importing parts, and the ease of importing, has had a profound impact on the market, the clients and the mechanics. As per one mechanic, 'I would say that the business of scrapping is very supportive for my business as it makes repair and maintenance affordable and time efficient.'<sup>52</sup> The availability of spare parts has also forced mechanics to upgrade and diversify their choice of tools, which earlier was not the case. 'We also have upgraded tools at our disposal so are more comfortable with the variety of spare parts. For instance we now use an oil-filter spanner instead of a chain sprocket to change the oil filter.'<sup>53</sup>

But the availability of spare parts does not always translate into affordability for the end user. Costs are also affected by inflation. One mechanic said that 'Over the years, spare parts have become costly. For instance, in 2000 the cost of a tyre [for mini-buses] was Rs2,500 (£15.00) and now it is Rs25,000 (£155). In 1992–93 the cost of a gear box was Rs3,500 (£21.50) and now it is Rs75,000 (£460.00).'<sup>54</sup> The consistent devaluation of the Pakistan rupee against the Japanese yen is cited as one of the causes of inflation.<sup>55</sup>

## 2.6 Role of the police

According to a public opinion poll conducted by Transparency International in 2013, corrupt practices by government officials – especially among the police – are increasing (The Express Tribune 2013). Many of this study's interviewees (with the exception of the traffic police officer) claimed in confidence that they feel the police department is corrupt to its core. 'It's totally corrupt and is hungry for money. They extort money on one pretext or another.'

There are no fixed rates and the cost of bribes is arbitrary. 'It varies as it's a matter of a judgment call by the man on duty. They first ask for a higher amount and after certain negotiations, settle for less.'

<sup>51</sup> See Section 3.16.

<sup>52</sup> See Section 3.4.

<sup>53</sup> See Section 3.16.

<sup>54</sup> See Section 3.9.

<sup>55</sup> See Section 3.11.

## BOX 2. VEHICLE HIJACKING IN KARACHI

Karachi has become a scoreboard for hijacked cars and motorcycles. It is like watching a cricket match. Every day the score increases and hapless losers are shunted from pillar to post.

All that the relevant authorities do is to start comparing the crime rate in Karachi with those of London and New York. Why do we have to do this? For us to lose a single vehicle is very traumatic.

Police statistics in this respect are shady. Most of the time it appears that they are themselves involved. If a report is lodged with the police, and the vehicle is found, the accessories are often missing.

But this is not the end. If the palms of policemen are not greased, to claim your car you have to face presumptions like the vehicle may have been used for transporting illicit drugs or weapons.

It is a sad commentary on the way the metropolis of Karachi has acquired a reputation for. If the property

of an average citizen cannot be safeguarded, what is the function of the guardians of law who have been assigned the sacred duty to protect the citizens?

The headline of a Dawn report of June 30 says: 41 vehicles taken away (9 cars, 32 motorbikes). If we take the average price of a car at Rs300,000, it comes to Rs2,700,000.

Thirty-two motorbikes at the average rate of Rs30,000 each will cost Rs960,000 – the total being Rs3,660,000. This is just one day's yield. The yearly yield comes to Rs1,335,900,000 plus the cash and jewellery on person.

Even the largest industry in Pakistan has yet to post such a gigantic 'profit'. Who are the beneficiaries of this thriving industry is not difficult to imagine. It is about time something tangible was done by the government to help Karachi rid of this menace.

Extract from Dawn (2004).

According to the interviewees, rates vary from Rs50 (£0.30) to Rs2,000 (£13.00).

The interviewed police officer admitted that malpractice exists in the police department but differed as to the scale of the corruption. He thinks that 'a mere 30 per cent' of police officers take bribes. He was also quick to justify this figure.

*An ordinary police constable cannot run his kitchen on a meagre amount of Rs15,000 [£92.00] or Rs17,000 [£105.00] per month. Have you ever questioned why the motorway police in Punjab do not take bribes? Their salary is one of the main reasons as the salary of a constable there is Rs30,000 [£185.00] per month. It's almost double the amount.<sup>56</sup>*



Traffic police in action  
© Faisal Imran

<sup>56</sup> See Section 3.5.

## BOX 3. CARGO-DRIVER DIARIES

These policemen are always looking to extort money from us. Once, my other cargo-carrier driver was stopped by a traffic constable near Ayesha Bawani School at Shahrah-e-Faisal. After scrutinising all the documents he said that the fitness certificate was not duly stamped and the truck would be impounded. The driver had an altercation with the police officer and in a much-irritated state of mind he called me up so that I could speak to the police officer. I tried to convince him that it's a mistake by the government official and I would rectify it at the first possible convenience. He insisted on challan [receipt for payment] and I said to him, 'Go ahead, but I will ask the driver to park it in such a way that the entire artery of Sharah-e-Faisal gets blocked'. Since he was out for money he back stepped and the entire episode of half an hour was concluded in a Rs150 (£0.92) bribe to that constable [...] It's a routine affair [...] Sometimes they ask for documents and sometimes object to side mirrors. They just need money.

Source: interview with a cargo-carrier driver, 28 August 2015 (see also Section 3.17).

It is not just the traffic police who take bribes. Other police officers refuse to pay to small-scale vendors for services<sup>57</sup> and overlook violations of the law in return for money. 'As per the rules we are not allowed to enter the city between the two prayer times: *fajar* and *isha*.<sup>58</sup> But you know how the system works here. If we pay a bribe to the policeman we can enter at any time [...] the rate varies [and] depends on the policeman and the area. Sindh is worst in terms of bribery. Here we have to give to the mobile police and to the traffic police as well.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, according to the respondents, the police also take advantage of commuters' ignorance of the laws to exploit them. The interviewed group of cyclists mentioned that they are often stopped by low-ranking police operators on one pretext or another and the purpose is just to extort money. 'No I don't know about the laws [...] all I know is that when I was young, I was

often stopped by policemen as they thought that me and my other cyclist friends were a nuisance for traffic and particularly for cars [...] how a cyclist could be a nuisance for other vehicles or create traffic problem [...] Those police corps just wanted to extort money from us.<sup>60</sup>

The response of commuters is to handle police highhandedness tactfully. According to a cargo driver, 'Just pay them Rs50 and drive away. No need to waste time, as time is precious in this business.'<sup>61</sup> The motorcyclist says he prefer not to stop in front of queues of traffic at signals. Motorcyclists think that police constables are 'too lazy' and scrutinise only riders at the front.<sup>62</sup> A third approach, often used by those who lack the correct legal documentation, is to appear confident by establishing eye contact or staring at police officers. 'We cannot chase them too far as we are shackled by the limitations of our defined jurisdictions,' said the traffic police constable.<sup>63</sup>

## 2.7 Validity of documents

The prevalence of corruption practiced by police department officials has meant that legal documents are often regarded as worthless. For instance, vehicle certificates and driving licenses can be illegally obtained. When one respondent asked how he secured his driving licence he said 'I got the licence from a motor-training institute by paying Rs500 (£3.00). It was in 1992.'<sup>64</sup>

Even if drivers have all the required documents, background discussions also suggest that due to law and order problems and the general security situation in Karachi, people prefer not to carry their original documents and normally keep a photocopy of their car registration document, computerised national identity cards (CNIC) and driving licence. For example, insurance certificates are commonly saleable items.

Many vehicle owners do not even update vehicle registration documents. According to the motorcyclist interviewed, 'Still it's not in my name. I use just the authority letter to drive it and to be honest with you I am not driving it anymore. My younger brother who is employed in a local hospital is using it and interestingly as per the same authority letter.'<sup>65</sup>

<sup>57</sup> See Section 3.2.

<sup>58</sup> In Islam, *fajar* (morning) is usually associated with morning prayers *Isha* (night) is usually associated with evening prayers

<sup>59</sup> See sections 3.20.

<sup>60</sup> See Section 3.13.

<sup>61</sup> See Section 3.17.

<sup>62</sup> See Section 3.12.

<sup>63</sup> See Section 3.5.

<sup>64</sup> See Section 3.1.

<sup>65</sup> See Section 3.12.



## BOX 4. OBTAINING ROUTE PERMITS: A TRICK OF TECHNOLOGY

Me: How do you make the route permits for KP or Punjab? It must take a lot of your time.

Driver: I have the trick of making a route permit for every other province from here!

Me: How do you perform this magic?

Driver: It's technology and contacts. Let me explain. Since I am a resident of Sindh Province so a route permit for Sindh is not an issue and that's my primary document. Remember that all other route permits will be based on that primary document. My broker here in Sindh has contacts in all other provinces. So I take a picture of my Sindh route permit and WhatsApp it [send via mobile phone] to his contact, to let's say in Peshawar. My Sindh agent will call him and before entering Peshawar City I will get the route permit for KP, as made by the Peshawar agent. Peshawar police are very strict and if you don't have the permit they can fine up to Rs6,000 [£36.82] and could also confiscate the truck.

Source: interview with a cargo driver, 28 August 2015 (see also Section 3.17).

The Motor Vehicle Ordinance of 1965 states that all vehicles require a valid fitness certificate to drive on the roads although usually, only drivers of commercial vehicles are targeted by inspectors. It is a common perception that these certificates are obtained by paying a bribe to the vehicle department. The difficulty in getting a certificate through the proper channels is cited as a major reason for the malpractice.

*The official fee for a fitness certificate is Rs50 [£0.30] for six months, but I give Rs1,000 [£6.00] to my contact there. If I did not pay a bribe, they would take a year to give me the certificate. The office is in Baldia Town [District West of Karachi] and you know that area is not safe. Also we will waste our petrol and our trips there would have an opportunity cost as well. So it's better to spend Rs1,000 and just forget about the rest [...] And now there is another mechanism to it. The personnel come to our place, at the hotel where we all sit, take Rs1,200 [£7.35] per vehicle and deliver the certificate at our place.<sup>66</sup>*

Because of environmental hazards, KCR rickshaws are not allowed to drive on the roads, although a limited number do as very few fitness certificates are inspected by the authorities. According to one rickshaw mechanic, 'Cylinder rickshaws are illegal now and are not allowed to ply on roads. They don't have fitness certificate as well.'<sup>67</sup>



Traffic pollution fogs the skies above Karachi © Faisal Imran

<sup>66</sup> See Section 3.1.

<sup>67</sup> See Section 3.3.

## 2.8 Health and the environment

Out of 22 megacities in Asia, Karachi has been declared the least environmentally friendly because of its poor air quality, inferior transport system and an inadequate sanitation network (Zia 2011). The most common form of pollutants are sulphur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), lead (Pb) and carbon monoxide (CO). According to the medical doctor interviewed, many trees have been cut down in Karachi, but new ones are not planted to replace them. 'The lungs of the city are not clean and the air-purifying mechanisms are being compromised. Karachi and Islamabad are the most polluted cities of Pakistan but for different reasons. Karachi is because of transport'.<sup>68</sup>

These pollutants can be lethal. 'In the presence of exogenous material, the human body can tolerate and perform to a certain level but not after that. It starts reacting in a variety of ways [...] chest infections, allergies and dermal problems [...] pulmonary diseases, asthma in children and chronic illnesses like cancers [...] an eye infection and other viral diseases. Conjunctivitis gets exacerbated in the presence of air pollution. [These] are the outcomes of congestion as caused by traffic [...] pollution in the air is the basis of all dermal problems and allergies.'

And besides air pollution, the high noise levels caused by the constant honking of horns, ageing engines, KCR rickshaws, pressure horns, ambulance sirens and police sirens to clear the way for VIPs is a source of constant stress for drivers while long hours of driving can also result in physical ailments such as back ache

and arthritis. 'High blood pressure is the long-term effect of high noise levels. There other psychological repercussions as well. In the short term, yes, behavioural changes can be observed and being intolerant is one of those'.<sup>69</sup>

Another respondent confirmed this opinion. 'Traffic congestion has also affected the attitudes of the drivers of the vehicles. They are more impatient, aggressive and always remain eager to express road rage through violence. Probably they are suffering from continuous traffic fatigue'.<sup>70</sup>

Though there have been no serious studies conducted on the financial repercussions of environmental degradation due to transport problems, nevertheless the medical doctor interviewed thinks that these problems can result in economic and productivity losses. 'An asthma patient cannot climb the staircase and a patient suffering from cardiac illness needs to take more rest. Moreover, both have to spend time waiting for doctors/consultants, periodically. So at one level productivity declines and on another level, a considerable amount of money is spent on medical care'.<sup>71</sup>

## 2.9 Gender issues

According to one respondent, overcrowding on mini-buses results in opportunistic sexual harassment. 'Riding mini-buses is a matter of convenience though they have the disadvantage of being congested. Besides, this lack of space provides perfect opportunities for sexual harassment. When I was an adolescent, a Pathan had attempted to sexually abuse me'.<sup>72</sup>

Table 6. Women-only selected demographic indicators

KARACHI WOMEN	1981	1998
Total married	66.06%	59.18%
Married (15–24 years)	37.42%	28.19%
Total employed	64,126 3.71 %	115,409 3.45 %
Total literate	48.84%	62.88%
Educational attainment	20.87%	27.7%
Divorced	0.23%	0.51%

Source: FBS various

<sup>68</sup> See Section 3.22.

<sup>69</sup> See Section 3.22.

<sup>70</sup> See Section 3.16.

<sup>71</sup> See Section 3.22.

<sup>72</sup> See Section 3.7.



Many women commuters experience harassment and discrimination on Karachi's public transport  
© Faisal Imran

Over the years, women's participation in public spheres has increased a great deal, but the design of buses remains unchanged: the space is segregated with two thirds for male passengers and one third for women. In the 1981 census the total population of Karachi Division was reported as 5.4 million with 2.95 million men and 2.45 million women. The 1998 census (the most recent census done in Pakistan) reports the total population at 9.8 million with approximately 5.2 million men and 4.5 million women (FBS various).

The upward shift in marriage age and an increase in the number of unmarried girls, employment, literacy rates and educational achievements illustrate the transitional nature of women's issues in Karachi. Numbers show that the desire for job security is slowly replacing the concept of security associated with marriage. Women no longer only aspire to literacy; they also aspire to perform well in the educational field. Nevertheless, the increased participation of women in public spheres is not adequately reflected in the transport sector. 'Yes, we do allow to men to sit on women-only seats, as it is not feasible to ply a half-occupied vehicle. But as soon as a woman enters the vehicle, men go to the back seats.'<sup>73</sup>

These problems are not confined to buses. One respondent confirmed that women travelling in qingqis and rickshaws are always harassed by crossing motorists and motorcyclists. The nature of the harassment varies from constant staring to passing remarks. 'It's a common complaint by women commuters. We can avoid it by having *pardah* [a covering or veil] in rickshaws as it is in Quetta and Peshawar.'<sup>74</sup> However, the female passenger interviewed for this study said that she never experiences these issues. 'I don't have any problems. I never faced sexual or otherwise any harassment and never got robbed. I think that if women are politically trained and conscious, they can solve such issues very easily.'<sup>75</sup>

In addition, from the interviews conducted by the Urban Resource Center (URC 2013) with female passengers, it can be deduced that the availability of public transport to their place of work is the prime determinant for many women's choice of job.

<sup>73</sup> See Section 3.9.

<sup>74</sup> See Section 3.19.

<sup>75</sup> See Section 3.8.



## 2.10 Perceptions of attitudes

Many respondents highlighted issues relating to the perceived irrational attitudes of drivers and the bad manners of younger people and commuters. A lack of observance of the laws was also quoted often. Many cited that drivers do not follow rules or respect traffic signal, and that they change driving lanes irregularly. They felt that pedestrians walked on the roads and crossed wherever they want to. 'It's because of our attitude. We don't respect laws.'<sup>76</sup>

The use of mobile phones is also cited as a source of trouble on the roads. The ambulance driver interviewed felt that using phones while driving makes drivers careless of emergency vehicles. 'There is an entire new generation of wired youngsters who have headsets plugged in their ears and they don't listen or care less for the hooter of a rushing ambulance [...] They are insensitive to the emergency situation we deal with.'<sup>77</sup>

A couple of respondents felt that having a formal education does not necessarily correlate with decent driving behaviour. According to one respondent, 'Most traffic problems are caused by educated but disrespectful and intolerant drivers. You can see the educated people in flashy cars using their mobile phones while driving.'<sup>78</sup> The cargo driver interviewed had a similar opinion: 'They [car drivers] are the most intolerant people of all. If by any chance I drive into the

extreme left-hand lane, they honk their horns, flash their headlights and when there is a delay in clearing the lane, they hurl abuse at us.'<sup>79</sup>

Occupying the wrong lane while driving creates difficulties for emergency services operators. 'First of all it is difficult to find a way in traffic as all the lanes are occupied by all. And if by any chance we get our way, we are usually followed by speeding motorcyclists and car drivers. They treat our clearing of the path as an opportunity to drive out of the rush quickly. But they don't understand that we have to constantly change lanes and we often have to apply the brakes abruptly. As a result, often they collide with us and cause damage to the ambulance as well as their own vehicle.'<sup>80</sup> Besides that the attitude of police officials are not viewed as helpful by the emergency services: 'They [police constables] are insensitive souls. They tend to ignore the sound of sirens and hooters. They just turn their face and regulate the traffic as usual.'<sup>81</sup>

People felt that easy access to loans has also modified the behaviour of drivers, who they feel do not value their vehicle assets sufficiently. According to one mechanic, 'Thirteen years ago my clientele consisted of more mature people who purchased cars using hard-earned money and hence they valued their asset more. Now [...] car owners [...] are less sensitive about their car, human lives and the value of money [...] I also find people becoming more careless about speeding and driving more rashly, compared to before.'<sup>82</sup>



An ambulance stuck in traffic © Faisal Imran

<sup>76</sup> See Section 3.11.

<sup>77</sup> See Section 3.18.

<sup>78</sup> See Section 3.14.

<sup>79</sup> See Section 3.17.

<sup>80</sup> See Section 3.18.

<sup>81</sup> See Section 3.18.

<sup>82</sup> See Section 3.16.

## BOX 5. BESIDES ROAD RAGE

*Yes, they used to bother us a lot and treat us as illiterate and poor. But I want to tell you that I am no illiterate. I have a diploma in hikmat<sup>83</sup> from the Hamdard University. Once, I was in an Urdu-speaking dominated neighbourhood in Malir 15 to drop a consignment of medicines there. The street was narrow and a push-cart vendor selling haleem<sup>84</sup> had blocked the passage. I honked at him to clear the way. The seller waved his hand but made no attempts to move. When I honked for the third time, the haleem seller took out a gun from his wooden money box, ran towards me and put it to my forehead. I was forced to reverse my truck back onto the main road. But I feel the situation has improved a lot after the Karachi operation.*

Source: interview with a cargo driver, 28 August 2015 (see also Section 3.17).

## 2.11 Security

In a recent statement the Karachi police chief admitted that despite Operation Karachi<sup>85</sup>, street crime remains unabated. He was of the view that a police force of 30,000 officials is not enough to control street crime in Karachi (Dawn 2015).

The respondents for this working paper are of the same view and this has an impact on their choice of transport routes and timings – the situation demands extra vigil on a daily basis. ‘I take care of timings, change the routes and try to get myself updated about the evolving scenarios [...] After dusk I prefer not to go to the sensitive areas of Karachi.’<sup>86</sup>

According to data from the Citizen Police Liaison Committee (The Express Tribune, 2014), 172 policemen were killed in 2013 while in 2012, 122 policemen were killed. In 2011, a total of 53 policemen died. Meanwhile, from 1992 to 2010 around 250 policemen were gunned down in Karachi (PPI News Agency 2014). ‘Over the years, a lot of our comrades were targeted and the phenomenon remains unabated.’<sup>87</sup>

Between September 05, 2013 to April 02, 2014, 7609 phones were snatched.<sup>88</sup> ‘Law and order situation is different to the security situation of the city. A lot of times, our passengers are deprived of their respective belongings and valuables. Sometimes it seems to be insider’s job, but I cannot say for sure. You need to understand that we cannot check every embarking passenger.’<sup>89</sup>

A couple of respondents mentioned that they have recognised and adapted to the dynamics of working in certain areas of Karachi, including one taxi driver: ‘I am up at 8.00 in the morning, on the road but don’t do business after dusk. I don’t go to some parts of Malir, Orangi, Korangi, Manghopir, New Karachi and Shershah. Due to the law and order situation of the city, we all go home by evening.’<sup>90</sup>

## BOX 6. THEFT FROM A MOVING VEHICLE

*On highways, we feel like ‘jesey machli paani maen aa jaae’ [‘a fish in a pond’]. Nobody bothers us except that excise people ask for tax documents which we usually have. We are much more relaxed on highways. But goods are stolen from the containers and that too from the moving vehicle. It usually happens in the night. Big trucks do not have the facility of seeing exactly behind the container. So, the thieves taking advantage of the darkness of night attach a small vehicle to the container so the speed of both the vehicles are synchronised. Then one person unlocks the container and throws the items into the Suzuki pickup. A lot of containers are deprived of their goods by the same method. We now don’t fix or weld the container with the chassis but rotate it 180 degrees through cranes so that the door of the container is blocked with the body of the truck, just behind the driver. That’s the only solution as goods worth millions of rupees are involved.*

Source: interview with a cargo driver, 28 August 2015 (see also Section 3.17).

<sup>83</sup> *Hikmat* refers to an indigenous method of treating ailments.

<sup>84</sup> *Haleem* is a stew popular in the Middle East, Central Asia, Pakistan and India.

<sup>85</sup> The Karachi Operation started on September 05, 2013, after a meeting of Federal Cabinet on September 2, 2013. The objective of the Operation was to curb the sectarian and ethnic killings in Karachi. The other factors that propelled an ever worsening law and order situation were turf wars, illegal land occupation and fights between various religious and political parties. <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/11/07/city/karachi/first-phase-of-karachi-operation-completed-9000-criminals-arrested-senate-told/>

<sup>86</sup> See Section 3.12.

<sup>87</sup> See Section 3.5.

<sup>88</sup> <http://blogs.epakistan.com/target-killings-extortions-street-crimes-not-losing-intensity-in-karachi/>

<sup>89</sup> See Section 3.6.

<sup>90</sup> See Section 3.1.

## 2.12 Road accidents

Two major causes of accidents are motorcycles and bus/mini-buses<sup>91</sup>. Motorcyclists account for 37.7 per cent of accidents in Karachi. In the first seven months of 2015, news reports indicate that 34 accidents claimed 128 lives on the streets of Karachi and 117 people were injured.<sup>92</sup>

Table 7. Karachi road-traffic accident data 2008–2013

	TOTAL ACCIDENTS 2008–2013	% TOTAL ACCIDENTS
Motorcycle	3,532	37.47
Bus/mini-bus/ coach	1,252	13.28
Car	1,011	10.73
Truck	592	6.28
Dumper	341	3.62
Other	2697	28.6
Total	9,425	100

When discussing these figures, the interviewed police officer was of the opinion that 'Those who do not observe laws are responsible for those accidents.'<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, one car mechanic blamed the rise in new luxury cars on the roads for the rise in the number of accidents.<sup>94</sup>

For accidents on the highways, a different reason was cited: lack of sleep and fatigue. According to the bus service manager interviewed, 'For the long routes we usually have two drivers. While one driver drives for eight to nine hours, the other sleeps. Most accidents happen because a single driver is stretched to his limits.'<sup>95</sup>

With the increasing number of women now in work, the trend of employing pick-and-drop services on a fixed monthly payment is also becoming popular. Commuting becomes relatively affordable and hassle-free for women. However, these are time-bound services and drivers are usually hard pressed against the clock. They resort to speeding and irresponsible driving. 'I manage by driving fast, changing lanes and through honking.'<sup>96</sup> Similar views were expressed by the intercity bus service manager, who drafts the bus schedule 'Time lost because of traffic jams is made up by speeding. For instance, during rush hours it takes two hours to drive from Cantonment Station to Sohrab Goth, while in non-rush hours it takes only an hour.'<sup>97</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Data collected by URC Road Traffic Injury Research and Prevention Centre, Rasheed Juma Institute, Karachi.

<sup>92</sup> The newspapers include *The Express Tribune* and *Daily Times*. Websites of media channels were also searched, including SAMAA TV and ARY News.

<sup>93</sup> See Section 3.5.

<sup>94</sup> See Section 3.2.

<sup>95</sup> See Section 3.6.

<sup>96</sup> See Section 3.14.

<sup>97</sup> See Section 3.6.



## 3

## Case studies

## 3.1 Jamil: taxi driver

Jamil originates from Rahim Yar Khan in the Punjab. His father came to Karachi in 1973 looking for work. Jamil was only a year old at that time. His father started working as a mason in North Nazimabad. His maternal uncle, who used to be a mason too, began driving a taxi in 1991–92. He had purchased the taxi in cash for Rs75,000. Jamil also started driving a taxi in 1993. He learnt driving from an *ustad*, but received his license from a motor-training institute by paying Rs500 in 1992. He and other people of his village live in a clan-based neighbourhood. They have 30–40 households in North Nazimabad.

Jamil was 20 years old when he started driving a taxi. He did not know his way around town but he recalls that the biggest advantage in those days was that of having functional meters. 'If we didn't know the route or the distance to the destination, the passengers used to guide us and they paid according to the meter. In fact, they used to leave tips as well,' he remembers. So why was the use of meters abandoned?

'Meters have disappeared because of the fluctuation in petrol prices and also because the vehicle fitness inspection system fell prey to corruption. It was some 10 to 12 years back when the meter system fell apart. First of all, there were complaints of meter tampering by passengers which were not far from the truth. Secondly, when meters were charging at Rs10 or Rs12 per kilometre, the petrol price was Rs72/litre. Then, the petrol prices rose to Rs108 per litre. How could one operate on Rs10 or Rs12 per kilometre then? Thirdly, the authorities allowed us to drive taxis without functional meters. Nobody monitored us, so it became acceptable to operate a taxi without meter. Recently, the police have started asking about meters again.'

Commenting on the lack of regulation in the traffic department, he shares that the mandatory fitness certificate of a vehicle can be acquired by bribing the vehicle department personnel. The official fee for fitness is Rs50 for six months but Jamil pays Rs1,000 to his contact there.

'The official fee for a fitness certificate is Rs50 [£0.30] for six months, but I give Rs1,000 [£6.00] to my contact there. If I did not pay a bribe, they would take a year to give me the certificate. The office is in Baldia Town [District West of Karachi] and you know that area is not safe. Also we will waste our petrol and our trips there would have an opportunity cost as well. So it's better to spend Rs1,000 and just forget about the rest [...] And now there is another mechanism to it. The personnel come to our place, at the hotel where we all sit, take Rs1,200 [£7.35] per vehicle and deliver the certificate at our place.'

He feels the police are equally corrupt and break the laws themselves to make some extra cash. 'Go to Sohrab Goth in the morning and you will get to know the reality yourselves. From 5.00am to 8–9.00am, they block all the routes into Karachi and take bribes from all the passengers and taxi drivers from upcountry.'

The overall-traffic situation is dismal in his opinion. 'The underpasses and overhead bridges do not help us. Everybody is forced to come from the wrong side to save fuel. In some places, even the traffic police facilitate that movement. I also think that the ever-increasing number of vehicles on the road will make even these bridges and underpasses run out of space soon.'

I ask him if he knows anything about the 'cutting' business which he describes in detail. He says that 'taxi-cutting' is rampant in Manghopir and Kati Pahari. Scrap sellers buy old taxis for Rs45,000 to Rs50,000, take out the spare parts and scrap the rest. Usually, cab drivers who leaving the business sell their taxis to these scrap dealers. The spare parts and anything useful is then sold and the rest goes to iron scrappers. This is done for taxis and old cars. New cars which are stolen are 'cut' in Shershah. According to Jamil, as soon as a stolen car arrives in these huge, heavily guarded premises in Shershah, they are completely taken apart within 15 minutes. Those separated parts are sold in shops just outside these premises in the main Shershah market.

Jamil gets up at 8.00 in the morning and is on the road soon after, but he avoids driving after dusk. 'The law and order situation of the city sends all of us home by evening,' he says. He also avoids going to some parts of Malir, Orangi Town, Korangi, Manghopir, New Karachi and Shershah areas.

The dwindling business has led him to think of selling his taxi and looking for a job as a domestic servant.

'I need Rs5,000 per month to pay the loan instalment. I purchased the taxi some three years ago for Rs250,000. I have paid back almost all the amount except Rs30,000 which I need to pay back in six months,' he says. 'There is even less business for taxis these days as people prefer to use the cheaper qingqis over taxis. This is unfair to us. These qingqis do not have route permits or vehicle fitness certificates and the drivers are also usually young and inexperienced.'

He regrets coming to Karachi in the wake of diminishing returns. 'Had we not migrated, we would have been better off. We would have our own livestock, our own place and our own people. Here, I pay Rs7,000 per month [inclusive of utilities] in rent. Business is not good, and I have had to pull my children out of school.'

## 3.2 Khalid: mechanic and panel beater

Khalid's parents belong to Attock, in the Punjab Province. They moved to Karachi looking for better opportunities. Yet his father remained jobless. His mother worked as a maid in nearby bungalows, in North Nazimabad, to run the house. His father died in 1982 when he was only 10 years old. He studied up to matriculation level and then joined an *ustad* (teacher) to learn how to mend a car. He used to receive a stipend from the *ustad* at the same time. He worked for the *ustad* for nearly five years and then came to Nazimabad to start on his own. He got married in 2002.

Khalid's business is not very profitable. He charges Rs10,000 for a ten-day job of 'denting' (panel beating) at a rate of Rs1,000 per day. 'Out of that thousand rupees in a day, I have to give some money to the assistants, buy material and pay the bill for electricity as well,' he says. The electricity tariff is fixed for shops but the car-painting jobs suffer from the frequent electricity outages as the machinery operates on electric power.

I ask him about any harassment or extortion from either the police or political parties. 'The police do not pay for labour and material. We have to do their jobs for free,' he tells me. 'The political parties used to force us to pay a sort of protection money in the name of donation. This practice has been discontinued after the Karachi Operation,' he says.

Khalid has observed more congestion on the roads, 'Qingqis are a problem but at the same time it is convenient for the passengers as they can travel cheaply and with the luxury of having a seat as well,' he says. 'We need bigger buses to counter that rush.' In his opinion, speeding luxury cars cause more traffic accidents than any other vehicles.

Since a lot of reconditioned cars are on the road these days, I want to know if the spare parts are easily available. Khalid tells me that it used to be difficult but no more. He cites the availability of spare parts to be a big reason behind the popularity of Suzuki cars. 'Their parts are cheap and readily available in every area of Pakistan. It helps in raising people's standard of living as those who have motorcycles can easily purchase second-hand Suzuki cars.'

Finally, Khalid says that the poor remain on the fringes of the transport system in Karachi and he feels that the government must act to improve this situation.

## 3.3 Nimroz: rickshaw mechanic

Nimroz's family was displaced from Torghar in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 1973 when the Tarbela Dam was constructed. Some members of his clan including his parents came to Karachi then and settled in Khamosh Colony and Patel Para. Nimroz's father became a rickshaw driver. He wanted his son to study but Nimroz was more interested in the engineering of the rickshaw. *Ustads* were highly respected in his community therefore he also wanted to become an *ustad*. It took him seven years to learn the trade earning a paltry *aath aanas* (50 paisas) daily. After his training was over, he started out from Khamosh Colony on his own. He has been in this trade for the last twenty five years.

He gives me a detailed description of the kind of rickshaws available in Karachi. 'Cylinder rickshaws are outlawed now and are not allowed on roads. They do not have fitness certificates as well. They are two-stroke rickshaws called KCR. Initially, they were imported from Turkey by Khawaja Autos. Then an assembly plant was put up in Kashmore and provided a controlled supply. In contrast, the supply of CNG rickshaws is unregulated and they have flooded the market. The same is true for qingqis,' he says. 'Do you repair qingqi as well?' I ask. He says no. 'Qingqis are different. They are just motorcycles with a passenger carrier fitted onto them.'

The situation has changed for rickshaws over the years. 'The vehicle-to-passenger ratio has changed a lot. Earlier, it used to be one rickshaw for every two passengers. Now there are 10 rickshaws for one passenger,' he observes.

Apparently, rickshaw spare parts are easily available. 'The CNG rickshaws are assembled here so there are no worries about the spare parts. The parts are from China and are also copied here. I am sure you know how our people excel at copying. Spare parts of KCR are available with greater difficulty.'

I want to know if the two-stroke rickshaws were more profitable than the CNG rickshaws. He denies this right away. 'The CNG rickshaws are obviously more profitable. A CNG rickshaw owner can earn up to Rs1,400 a day. In contrast, a KCR rickshaw driver can earn a maximum of Rs500 per day. This difference is because of the ever-rising price of petrol. Two of my three sons are CNG rickshaw drivers. Neither of them wanted to learn to be mechanics as there is no charm left in the occupation.'

I ask him to elaborate on how his business has suffered. 'Our business has decreased. Earlier people used to insist on hiring the services of an *ustad* to fix their vehicles. Now they look for cheap options. Over the years, the rickshaw drivers have picked up some mechanical skills as well. So they do not go to mechanics for smaller problems and fix them on their own. There is no growth in this occupation and it is no more profitable. People are less quality conscious now.'

### 3.4 Asif: taxi mechanic

Asif owns an auto workshop in the Paharganj area and is an expert in repairing taxis. He speaks in clear Urdu and a few words in English. 'Where did you pick up English?' I ask in amazement. 'I went to school until class five,' he replies.

He belongs to a Pashtun family which migrated from Kala Dhaka to Karachi and had settled in Hussain d'Silva Town in North Nazimabad. Obviously not aided by circumstances to continue his education, his choice of profession is my next point of interest. 'I used to frequent a rickshaw stand near my house when I was a kid. I developed an interest in the mechanics of automobiles and later started working on taxis,' he says.

Asif started work under an *ustad* in 1996. He earned Rs5 per day and meals at that time. In four years when he left that garage, his earnings had risen to Rs50 a day. 'Why did you leave your *ustad*?' I ask, since traditions of commitments are strong among the working class. But in Asif's case, it was actually the *ustad* who moved to Dubai and left Asif to work independently. He started his own workshop in 2002 in Paharganj and is satisfied with the income it is generating. Now, he has an apprentice of his own whom he pays Rs30 per day.

The rapid evolution of technology does not bother Asif. 'Most taxis are still internal combustion engines, so I don't face any major issues. I have also learnt to repair EFI [electronic fuel injection] engines. I have developed a certain level of expertise on engines and that is why people hire me to repair generators as well. I picked it all up while on the job, with some guidance and some trial and error experimentation.'

Along with technology, Asif has also picked up a good sense of the materials and their availability. He feels that the business of scrapping is very supportive for this work as it makes repair and maintenance affordable and time efficient. Most of the spare parts are available at the famous market of Shershah in Karachi. He describes this material as scrap or second-hand but of reasonable quality, except for the Chinese stuff which he finds cheap but inferior. His technical knowledge comes to the fore in this area too. 'Availability of spare parts is not an issue any more with the advancement of technology. One can search on the Internet and order any from Dubai.'

I ask him if he thinks old and dilapidated taxis contribute to pollution and traffic jams in the city. He disagrees. 'In my opinion, only bank managers are responsible for the traffic chaos in Karachi. Taxis and old cars have always been there. These bank managers have extended car loans left, right and centre just to meet their targets and have increased the traffic volume manifolds. They are just profiteers and salesmen with no sense of moral responsibility. Banks should be blamed for Karachi's traffic woes.'

In future, he wants to move back to his native town Kala Dhaka which has become a district now. 'I am sure I will be able to do something there. The chaotic pace of city life has become unbearable for me.'

### 3.5 George: police traffic officer

Traffic officer George's parents were farm labourers in Gujranwala who came to Karachi in search of a decent livelihood many years ago. Karachi attracted them because of the job opportunities available here at the time and with some of their family members initially providing them shelter, they were able to settle down in the metropolis.

George, who longed for a government job, was compelled to take up a tailor's job at first in the Defence Housing Authority and later in North Nazimabad. 'I was earning well in that trade, but I wanted to get a government job which I finally got in 1994.' When asked if he paid a bribe to get the job, George denies it but stops short of elaborating on how he actually ended up with it.

I inquire if he was properly trained for traffic handling. 'Yes, quite a few times,' he says. 'I received training in 1995 at first. It was a nine-month exhaustive training on my role as traffic officer and the responsibilities associated to it. Actually, a sense of responsibility comes with training depending on your designation. Whenever someone's rank or designation changes, he receives further training for it accordingly.'

I then ask him which area of the city he considers as the toughest when it comes to manning the traffic. 'Sohrab Goth is the toughest because of heavy traffic and a different type of crowd,' replies George. 'It was here that I was posted first and later at Gulberg. When Gulberg was declared a politically sensitive area, I found it better to get myself transferred back to Sohrab Goth and remained posted there for three years. From there on, it is a story of continuous transfers I have served at New

Karachi, Tariq Road, back at New Karachi and many other places. In 2005, I was promoted from *hawaldar* [constable] to head constable and again received training at the Police Training Camp at Baldia Colony.'

Is it a coincidence that most of his postings have been closer to his residence in North Nazimabad? 'I prefer to be posted near my house here in North Nazimabad to avoid traffic problems,' says George diplomatically. Endorsing my views that the traffic problems have increased in Karachi, he says: 'Yes, the traffic problems have increased mainly due to the growing number of vehicles on the roads. That has also exacerbated lawlessness. No one follows the law. Trust me, the majority of drivers here violate traffic signals.'

However, when reminded that drivers who break the law are often overlooked by bribe-taking policemen, George defends the phenomenon: 'Seventy per cent of policemen do not take bribes. It is just 30 per cent who bring a bad name to the police force. Having said that, we must also consider the reasons why the police have become notorious. An ordinary police constable cannot run his kitchen on a meagre amount of Rs15,000 [£92.00] or Rs17,000 [£105.00] per month.'

George argues that better salaries can put an end to the bribery menace among the police force. Have you ever questioned why the motorway police in Punjab do not take bribes? Their salary is one of the main reasons as the salary of a constable there is Rs30,000 [£185.00] per month. It's almost double the amount.'

He also cites *qingqis* as a problem contributing to traffic congestion in the city as well, as the drivers who constantly violate the one-way rule. I ask him if more signal-free corridors are a solution. 'No,' he says. 'It is not a matter of corridors being signal free. It is just a matter of observing the discipline of traffic and to respect the law of the land. I believe the roads also do not have the capacity to absorb the ever-increasing number of vehicles.'

'Lack of parking space in the city is another issue. Have you ever observed that all these newly constructed shopping malls and housing complexes do not provide enough parking space and as a result, people have occupied streets and lanes in the city for parking their vehicles?'

I ask how the performance of traffic policemen is monitored. 'My performance is monitored by my seniors which is a part of their duty. It is monitored through training, by assessing our duties – if they are being performed according to the job description – and also by organising various campaigns which the traffic police run periodically in the city,' he says. 'For



instance, we have had drives against tinted glasses, for the compulsory use of helmets and for proper number plates. A big indicator is the number of *challans* [receipts for payment] issued during those campaigns. Also, we report to our respective stations on a daily basis.'

But despite all this, the number of accidents in the city is at alarming level, I remind him. 'Those who do not observe the law are responsible for those accidents,' he says. When probed if the traffic policemen receive any commission or percentage of the *challans* issued, George denies this.

I further ask him about the challenges traffic police officers face in the line of duty. 'Insecurity,' he says at once. 'Over the years, a lot of our fellow traffic policemen have been targeted by snipers and such violence remains unchecked. Also, we cannot chase a violator beyond our duty point and we feel handicapped because of our defined jurisdictions.'

### 3.6 Jawed: intercity bus service manager

Currently in his early 30s, Jawed was born in Rahim Yar Khan. When he grew up, he migrated to Lahore to work as a tailor and also acquired embroidery skills. In 2008, his maternal uncle, who was employed in the Blue Lines (intercity) Coach Service, brought him to Karachi to work for the company. Jawed was trained on the job and was initially assigned to finding customers for Blue Lines. Later, he became the manager of the booking office.

His company has eight coaches and four vans at present. There are five Blue Lines offices in the city. All offices have a bare minimum quota for passengers and if a particular office experiences extra demand, it negotiates with other offices. These buses travel to Lahore in the Punjab, Jacobabad in Sindh and Dera Murad Jamali in the Balochistan province.

According to Jawed, the fares range from Rs700 to Rs2,000. For instance, they charge Rs700 from Karachi to Thatta in Sindh, Rs800 for Jacobabad, Rs900 for Dera Murad Jamali, and Rs2,000 for Lahore. But it varies as well. For instance, during Eid holidays when people want to go to their native home to celebrate with their families, the fare from Karachi to Jacobabad rises to Rs1,300 per passenger, he informs me. The 46-seater buses are almost always full. 'Most of the time, buses and coaches are 95 per cent occupied, except for holidays,' Jawed tells me.

There are no proper bus terminals for these buses, however. 'We used to park right here in front of this booking office,' says Jawed. 'Nowadays, the police have tightened controls so we park under the Saddar Bridge. This gives us only 10 minutes to ask passengers to get onto the bus. We have been asked to abolish the *addas* [terminal] we have in the city. The new terminal at Sabzi Mandi is too far from the city and is not viable for most of our potential passengers. On the other hand, the private terminal at the same place is very expensive and we cannot afford to use it. I think that there should be a terminal at Cantonment Station as well.'

He tells me that there is a joint association of intercity bus companies that can make demands like these to the government, but it concerns itself with major issues. For example, the association took up the issue of parking with the High Court recently, he informs me.

I ask how many drivers they employ on each trip because of the distances involved. 'For the long routes we usually have two drivers. While one drives for eight to nine hours, the other sleeps. Most accidents happen because a single driver is stretched to his limits. Usually, the accompanying driver is an apprentice [...] These apprentices often do not have driving licenses, though the main driver with the responsibility for the vehicle does have driving a license,' he says. The drivers are employed on daily basis. 'For instance, a driver is paid Rs1,500 to drive to and from Jacobabad, which is a full 24-hour duty cycle,' he explains.

Jawed reports that the bus companies do have any insurance. The passengers, the drivers, the vehicle: nothing and no one is insured. Jawed feels this should change. 'It gives us financial protection against accidents and other such incidents.'

I ask him if these buses are robbed on the way. He says that they are. 'Sometimes, these appear to be insider jobs, but I cannot say for sure. You need to understand that we cannot check every passenger,' he says. Jawed also reports that most often, the police take bribes from them at Al-Asif Square.

I ask him why these buses are notorious for speeding. He says it happens because the driver is trying to make up for time lost waiting in traffic inside the cities. 'During rush hours, the normal one-hour distance from Cantonment Station to Sohrab Goth stretches to two hours,' he claims. 'Heavy traffic is not allowed on the Lyari Expressway. We would save a lot of time if it were allowed.'

Jawed discusses the security threat his business faces in Sindh. 'Many routes are difficult for us because of highwaymen. Dadu-Ranipur is a dangerous route.

Similarly, the Sukkur-Shikarpur route is notorious for armed robberies,' he informs me. 'We usually employ Baloch [ie local] drivers on the Jacobabad route, and that is the only safety measure we have. We rely on them to know the environment and the people in the area.'

### 3.7 Faisal: male passenger

Faisal is a 25-year-old student at the Federal Urdu University, Karachi. His father migrated from Haripur, Hazara in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. He lives in Baldia town in western Karachi and travels every day to Il Chundrigar Road in the south.

Faisal has been using public transport for ten years and he mostly use buses and auto rickshaws (popularly known as autos). 'An auto is good because it is open on two sides and one does not feel suffocated. The old style Mazda taxis are not airy. Yellow cabs are spacious but their fares are too high,' he says.

He does not like travelling by mini-bus very much. 'Riding mini-buses is a matter of convenience though they have the disadvantage of being congested. Besides, this lack of space provides perfect opportunities for sexual harassment. When I was an adolescent, a Pathan had attempted to sexually abuse me [...] The other disadvantage of a mini-bus is that the passengers' clothes get dirty and crumpled. The little space forces passengers to lean against each other or the walls and seats of the bus,' he says. 'The conductors are usually ill-mannered too. They do not know how to talk with elders and they often misbehave with women. They abuse and make fun of transgender people as well.' Still, he concedes that the advantage of travelling by bus is that it offers concessional fares to students.

I ask him how much time he spends on the road in a day. 'On any single day, it is normal to spend two and a half hours on the road just to go to the office and come back home. I spend Rs38 per day in fares,' he says. The fare has risen sharply over the last decade. He remembers it used to be less than or around Rs10. 'To make the situation worse, the fares are increasing but the condition of the buses is deteriorating to the extent that if it rains, water drips from the roofs. The mud gets inside the buses and spoils our clothes.'

He agrees that having a motorcycle instead would be a great advantage. 'It would save time and money and give me a sense of freedom. I would be able to manoeuvre my way according to the law and order situation of the city and according to my needs.'

Judging by his dislike for travelling by bus, I ask him how he prefers to travel when he is with family. 'I mostly use an auto when I am with family. Even if the women of the family have to travel without any male escort, I advise them to hire an auto and not take the coach, bus or mini-bus,' he says. I want to know if qingqis are an option for him. 'A dangerous option,' he says. 'Mostly young boys drive qingqis which have no number plates or chassis numbers. They do not have permissions or driving licenses. It is not at all safe and these are mostly stolen motorcycles being converted into qingqis. They remain popular only because they are cheap and ply on routes where buses and even mini-buses are not operative.'

His recommendations to improve the situation are simple. 'The monopoly of a single ethnic group on the transport system should be broken. Fares need to be reduced because buses run on CNG, but their operators charge fares based on diesel prices. Issuance of vehicle fitness certificates needs to be monitored.'

### 3.8 Naghma: female passenger

Young Naghma is an independent researcher and political activist. She lives in Model Colony, Karachi and has recently graduated from the University of Karachi. She suffers from a fear of driving and travels by auto rickshaw. On average, she spends Rs2,000 per day on rickshaw fares.

She has been scared of driving ever since she lost her father in a road accident in 2012 while her brother was seriously injured. 'My father and my brother were travelling in a car on the link road that connects Malir Cantonment to the Super Highway and were hit by a speeding car belonging to a feudal lord. I am being treated for this phobia [...] and am hopeful that I will be able to drive again very soon. A couple of years ago when I used to drive, I was also hit a motorcyclist.'

When queried about the problems she may be facing as a female while travelling by public transport, Naghma says exorbitant fares charged by rickshaw drivers during the CNG shutdown days are bothersome. 'They actually charge double the usual fare on such days,' she says.

However, Naghma is not wary of travelling late at night. 'I do not have a problem travelling by public transport during the night. I haven't faced any form of harassment nor have I been robbed. I think if women are more aware of things and are trained to tackle such problems, they can be better off.'



Another thing she loathes is the misuse of footpaths by motorcyclists which, she says, can make life difficult for the pedestrians.

While Naghma is comfortable travelling by rickshaw, she does find qingqi a bit too dangerous for her liking. However, she does not favour banning qingqis at all. 'Many students are suffering from the ban. I don't understand why the government can't regularise the qingqis and allow them to operate in a separate lane.'

I ask if she finds it difficult to hire a rickshaw since she must search for one every time she wants to go somewhere. Naghma has a simple solution to the problem. 'Actually, there are a few trusted rickshaw drivers who live near my house. I call them by phone which is convenient, especially in cases of strikes or some unusual happening in the city.'

Finally, I ask her if as a political worker, she can think of a solution to Karachi's traffic problems. 'Mass transit is the only solution and the revival of Karachi Circular Railway. So many people will benefit from it. Also, the roads should be broadened and the number of buses should be increased. The public transport system should be pro-poor and there shouldn't be any ban on pillion riding as it is to the disadvantage of the poor,' says Naghma.

### 3.9 Muhammad: mini-bus mechanic and conductor

Muhammad is originally from Faisalabad, the city formerly known as Lyallpur. He completed his matriculation in the late 1970s and started working at the Lyallpur Transport Company which had 80 buses and 14 trucks. Muhammad started as a helper, went on to become a fitter and then qualified as a mechanic. He also acquired theoretical knowledge while learning on the job. During the Bhutto era, he tried his luck in the Gulf but unsuccessfully. He finally came to Karachi in search of better prospects. In 1986, he settled down in New Karachi where he still lives. He used to earn Rs6–700 per month at the time he began working as a mechanic in Karachi. In three years, his salary had increased to Rs1,000 per month. He began work in partnership but soon developed differences with his partner and began a solo career. He has also trained many people who have gone on to work independently.

The first thing I want him to tell me is the reason for the dwindling number of buses and mini-buses in Karachi. He feels there are multiple reasons that have brought this situation about. One is that spare parts

have become costly over the years. 'For instance, in the year 2000, a mini-bus tyre cost Rs2,500 while it costs Rs25,000 now. In 1992–93, the cost of a gear box was Rs3,500 which has risen to Rs75,000 now,' he says. Secondly, he feels that the fares are on the lower side. 'The distance from New Karachi to Kemari is 35km and the fare is Rs17–18. In Kashmir, the fare for 10km is Rs150 and one has to pay extra Rs50 for baggage. In Faisalabad, Rs100 is charged for a distance of 35km.' I ask him to suggest the right fare from New Karachi to Kemari. 'It should be Rs35 one way to make the route financially feasible,' he says.

The third reason he gives is the rising cost of vehicles. 'In 2003, when a Mazda (mini-bus) was assembled here, the price was Rs350,000. The entire operation has been shifted to India and now a vehicle costs Rs1.4 million. It is difficult to get a zero-meter Mazda these days and the Chinese vehicles which are available are not as powerful for carrying loads and do not last long on Karachi roads.'

This downward trend affects his business as well. He tells me that bus owners are increasingly converting their mini-buses into contract vehicles. This situation affects the poor the most. 'As many as 450 mini-buses used to run on the W-11 route. The number has now come down to 150–170. Earlier, two to three buses used to depart from the terminal every minute and now one bus leaves every two minutes.'

He says that the travelling time from New Karachi to Kemari and from Kemari to New Karachi is 1.5 hours. The buses have to wait for two hours at each of the terminals. So it takes them 3.5 hours to complete one trip. 'Usually, we do two trips in a day. The business becomes profitable in three trips,' he says. 'We do not earn more than Rs2,000 on a given day. This is our net income. It could be slightly more if we made three trips in a day.'

I ask him about why people travel on top of buses when it is illegal. There is a fine of Rs500 for this offence. He explains that many people prefer it as it is very hot inside the bus. 'It is also safer as robbers ignore the people sitting on the top of the bus,' he says.

Muhammad explains that allowing men to sit on women-only seats is necessary from a financial point of view. A half-empty vehicle does not make a profit. 'But if a woman enters the bus, we make sure the men vacate the seats,' he insists. He feels that the bus drivers' association is a great support in all police-related matters like accidents or arson attacks.

He dismisses the idea that conductors are rude to passengers. 'There are a couple of ignorant people amongst us who misbehave, but you can find such people anywhere. Tell me about those bikers who appear to be educated but hurl abuse at us.'

Finally, I ask about his experiences with qingqis. He is quick to condemn them. 'They are a nuisance. Most of the qingqi drivers are usually very young and inexperienced. They cause all the traffic jams in town and hardly care about the flow of traffic.'

### 3.10 George and Iqbal: CNG rickshaw drivers

Both George and Iqbal are in their late 40s to early 50s. Both are Christians and have been driving rickshaws for many years. After sustaining a heart attack earlier this year, George has recently left the occupation while Siraj still continues to drive his rickshaw.

During the interview, for the most part, George answered for both of them. When queried about their birthplace and origin, both George and Iqbal have similar stories. 'Our parents came to Karachi from Gujranwala in search of livelihoods in the early 1970s. They used to be farm workers but were not earning enough to feed the family. It is common wisdom that opportunities in Karachi are better than in any other city of Pakistan.'

I ask them if they took up rickshaw driving as a preferred choice. 'No. In the early 80s I was employed in Fateh Ali Chemicals, near Valika Textiles in the SITE area. I had started driving a rickshaw to supplement my income, so it was a part time occupation,' says George.

Did he purchase the rickshaw or was it a rented one? 'No, it was rented. The owner of the rickshaw was a Punjabi and I used to pay him Rs70 per day. In 1986, I quit my job at Fateh Ali Chemicals and purchased a two-stroke rickshaw for Rs60,000,' says George. 'By then I had saved some money and bought that rickshaw for cash, paying the full amount.'

When asked why he left the Fateh Ali Chemicals job, George says he grew tired of the restrictions that come with a salaried job. 'I felt an immense sense of independence in my driving occupation. No boss to report to, no fixed timings to follow and no pressure of work targets. With driving, I learnt to set my own income

targets. For instance, I would tell myself "Mr. George, you have earned Rs800 and now you should go home and spend time with your family". This is the type of independence I enjoy the most. But in the beginning of this year, I suffered a major heart attack and I have had to give up driving.'

I ask him further if the stress of driving in heavy traffic took its toll on him and caused the heart attack. 'I don't think so as I have never faced any major problems due to traffic hazards in my long career. I used to carry all my documents with me and my dealing with passengers was actually very good. I think that the heart attack occurred because I was a heavy smoker and consumer of betel leaf.'

How long can one drive a rickshaw for in a day? 'Considering the condition of the roads, the congestion and the weather, 8–10 hours a day is the maximum time one can drive a rickshaw. A young man with exceptional endurance and energy can do it for 12 hours in a go, but not more than that,' he says.

Next, I want to know when and why the practice of using fare meters ended. George remembers it happened in 2005–2006. He believes a lot of things had happened at the same time then. 'The rickshaw drivers tampered with the meters en masse, the CNG prices shot up<sup>98</sup> and the authorities relaxed meter inspections all around the same time.' It has become rather difficult to determine the right fare for a journey, he feels. 'The length of the route, the law and order situation of the city, the hour of the day or night, passenger preferences and a tacit understanding amongst rickshaw drivers guides us in asking for the right amount of money. Initially, our experiences with using meters provided some indication of price, but that soon lost its utility.'

George's rickshaw is not actually legally insured, although he possesses third-party insurance papers to fulfil the requirements of the law, which means he is not insured in case of an accident.

When I ask him to describe trends in his business, he says that mostly people use rickshaws from the initial days of the month (when they receive their salaries) until the 20th of the month. 'After the 20th, business is mostly nil,' he says. 'The Musharraf era was the best for our business.<sup>99</sup> People had money to spend and hence they were generous in their use of rickshaws [...] The business went down drastically under Zardari.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> CNG was selling for Rs18/kg in 2005 and the price later increased exponentially.

<sup>99</sup> Pervez Musharraf, president of Pakistan 2001–2008.

<sup>100</sup> Asif Ali Zardari, president of Pakistan, 2008–2013.

George has a lot of knowledge about the rickshaw-cutting business. He tells me it happens in Kati Pahari, Lyari, Laloo Khet, Bara Board and Orangi Town areas. Old and burnt-out rickshaws are usually broken down for spare parts or 'kabuli'. The chassis are claimed by scrap dealers. 'Other stolen vehicles are dismantled in Banaras, Shershah and near Filmistan at Teen Hatti within an hour of having been stolen. Spare parts are then sold in Ranchore Lines. All rickshaw mechanics know about it,' he says.

He sees the flyovers as a mixed blessing. 'They are good but because of their design faults, traffic is forced to move in from the wrong direction and violate the designated one-ways,' he observes. But his biggest problem is the motorcyclists. 'They don't care for traffic laws and are always in a hurry. They do not even have rear-view mirrors. We have to be extra cautious to avoid trouble with them,' George says. 'The police need to be straightened out and everything will be OK then.'

He also mentions that CNG rickshaws are also used as a pick-and-drop service, particularly for school children. 'Parents remain comfortable with the arrangement as it takes less time compared to vans, and it is also good for us as we receive a fixed monthly amount.'

### 3.11 An anonymous vehicle-parts dealer

The spare-parts dealer is around 30 years of age. He owns an vehicle-parts shop in Plaza Market at Tibet Centre in Karachi. He is cautious and provides limited information. He also refuses to share his name.

I ask him about how he started selling spare parts. He shares a long story which also points towards a possible reason for his reluctance to talk. Reportedly, he was a student at the Pak-Swedish Technical Institute in the Landhi area where he enrolled after completing his matriculation. All was going well until 1996, when politician and leader of terrorist organisation al-Zulfiqar Mir Murtaza Bhutto was suddenly murdered. 'Much political mayhem followed, which scared me from going to the area and so I had to leave my studies,' he recalls. 'I also trained in rehabilitating drug addicts before all this. After leaving my studies, I began to search for a job, to help support my household. It was a long and frustrating search. Finally, an acquaintance set me up with a salesman in Plaza Market in 2004. My responsibilities included handling of customers and menial work.'

He is disappointed at the current state of business. 'Business was at its peak in 2005,' he says. 'The influx of Afghans has spoiled the business. They use drug money to finance the business of spare parts. They smuggle items through the Torkham border, flouting all the legal requirements. By contrast, we are bound to pay taxes, custom duties, wait for customs clearances and sometimes have to pay demurrages as well. The Afghans have invested enormously in local markets. They sell spare parts at much cheaper rates than us. We are made expensive for the end user. The Afghans have developed strong local networks. Our legal status keeps us out of that circuit [...] Another reason is that the rupee is constantly getting devalued against the US dollars and the yen.'

Next I want to know if the Shershah market is a competitor to the Plaza market. He disagrees because he says the Shershah market also sells new spare parts as well and at cheaper rates. However, he offers no explanation for this difference.

I am curious about the sustainability and survival of the market if the legal spare parts business is not profitable. He quickly provides an alternative. 'It is profitable at the high end, for example, selling spare parts to Toyota and Honda companies is very lucrative.'

Coming to the traffic situation, I ask him about the biggest challenges affecting his business. He immediately comes up with the issue of parking. 'There is no parking space for our clients. They usually have to park their vehicles at considerable distances.'

He feels the traffic problems of the city are rooted in our attitude of not respecting laws. Besides, he also holds schools responsible. 'Schools are also responsible for the traffic jams. Very few schools have proper parking. Just visit the Plaza around 1.00pm when school finishes and you will understand why.'

### 3.12 Humayun: motorcyclist

Humayun's parents were farm labourers in Sheikhpura. In 1972, they came to Karachi to look for work. At first, they stayed with a relative in Ranchore Lines and later purchased a small house in the Jubilee area. Luckily, his father found a job in the merchant navy. With the money he made from there, his mother purchased a house in Paharganj, North Nazimabad in 1978. Humayun was

born there in 1981. He matriculated and later gained a Bachelor of Arts degree at Karachi University.

Humayun started riding a motorcycle when he was in class 10. He was forced to start early as the women in his family needed a male escort for various chores in the absence of his father. 'I used to take my mother grocery shopping and take my sisters to school on that bike. It was economical as well. Before I bought a bike, we used rickshaws and taxis, both of which were more expensive,' he says.

At that time and age, owning a bike was a sign of prestige among his friends. It was also very economical. 'If I remember correctly, petrol was Rs28/litre at that time. Monthly petrol expenses were Rs1,000 with Rs150 per month for maintenance. It was terribly cheap,' he says. Comparatively, he now claims to spend Rs100 per day on a 27km route; a complete round trip between home and office with some errands in between. This trip takes him 40 minutes on weekdays and hardly twenty minutes on a Sunday.

Being underage, for a long time he had no legal documents to his name including a driver's license. He used an authority letter obtained from the first owner of the bike instead. Seventeen years later, his younger brother is using the same authority letter to ride that motorcycle. I ask him if the police have ever bothered him. He admits to paying bribes. 'The police used to trouble me a lot. I used to get away by giving them Rs50.' Still, he feels that the police are biased against motorcyclists.

This brings us to the traffic problems he faces as a motorcyclist. I want to know the foremost personal issues that he faces in Karachi. His immediate response is about personal safety. 'It is safer to travel in a car when you are with family. A motorcyclist is more at risk of snatching. The snatchers can also observe a motorcyclist easily to know whether he is armed or not. They cannot always tell that about car drivers and hence there is an increased deterrence. Having said that, when I am riding a bike, I can also easily manoeuvre it in narrow streets and spaces with greater ease, unlike with a car. That boosts my confidence.' Still, he is unwilling to allow his children to ride a motorcycle for this reason.

Discussing safety precautions, he recommends being careful about one's timings, frequently changing one's route and staying abreast with the city's law and order situations. 'I prefer to avoid the sensitive areas after dusk,' he adds.

He believes that the biggest problem for a motorcyclist is not having a spare wheel in case of punctures, especially if it occurs while you are travelling with family at night. The ban on pillion riding is another source of bother for motorcyclists. 'I need somebody to accompany me if I am carrying heavy items like a TV set or bulk load of grocery,' he explains.

I ask him how the traffic has changed over 17 years. He paints a familiar picture. 'The volume of traffic has increased manifold. One problem is the ever-increasing number of cars on the roads; the other is qingqis. The qingqis stop anywhere without considering the traffic behind them. They occupy multiple parallel lanes and bikers have to zigzag between them to find their way. Mini-buses are the same. They stop anywhere but at the designated bus stops and are driven like airplanes.'

In his opinion, the signal-free corridors encourage speeding which is a problem for motorcyclists. The lack of u-turns forces a lot of motorcyclists to violate the one-way rule, he feels. 'They must do this to save time and fuel. I myself violate the one-way rule and ride against the traffic sometimes,' he says. I ask if the traffic constables bother him. He says, 'In some places, the constables prefer to ignore us because they know that obstructing us will cause a bigger mess [...] You should ride past them with confidence, staring right into their eyes. This is a psychological trick. They will not bother you then. Another trick is to avoid stopping your bike at the front of traffic signals. Constables want to save time and effort and usually pick on the bikers right in front of them.'

Using a rear-view mirror is a disturbance to him. The mirrors extend outside the vehicle's body and can hit pedestrians and other vehicles, which is especially dangerous when the bike is travelling at high speed. The mirror also gets stolen frequently. Interestingly, rear-view mirrors on motorcycles are considered a sign of backwardness. He says that youngsters generally mock any biker who uses a rear-view mirror for being old-fashioned.

He dismisses the utility of a mass transit system for himself. 'Over the years, I have become used to having a vehicle on my doorstep. No mass transit can provide that service to me. I don't want to walk.'

Finally, Humayun thinks the lack of parking space is a serious issue in Karachi. 'There should be proper parking space every 500 metres.'



### 3.13 Shamoon: cyclist

Twenty-seven-year-old Shamoon, a Punjabi Christian, has been a cycling enthusiast for fourteen years. He is called *ustad* (teacher) as he trains new cyclists. Shamoon believes cycling is a complete form of exercise. He also owns a car but finds cycling a healthier and more economical option, especially with the price of petrol rising by the day. He cycles to his office in 20 minutes every day and claims to hit a speed of 60km per hour.

I ask him about his biggest challenge. Shamoon mentions the roads. 'The roads are in a bad condition. Potholes damage bicycles and give cyclists back problems. Haphazard traffic and irregular parking force us to weave our way through. I am especially wary of qingqi drivers who have no idea how to use the road.' Since similar accusations are made against other cyclists too: I ask Shamoon his opinion on the matter. 'The motorists try to harass the cyclists,' he insists. He admits he has no knowledge of any traffic laws governing cyclists but he is sure the traffic police are only seeking bribes when they stop cyclists for minor issues like having a missing bell or no light.

Shamoon and his group cycle to the Punjab once a year to attend the Mary the Chaste festival. Each cyclist has to show a route permit to the motorway police in the Punjab. To obtain a route permit from the Union Council office, each one of the 70 cyclists pays around Rs400 in bribes. 'This means we pay Rs28,000 in bribes every year to pursue our passion and uphold the tradition,' he says.

Shamoon trains new cyclists on the beach every Thursday. However, he feels inflation has made it expensive for cyclists to take care of their diet. Safety gear like helmets and elbow guards are also too expensive.

Talking about the existing roads and infrastructure, Shamoon points out that the signal-free corridors and bypasses create a dangerous environment for cyclists. 'We cannot take u-turns and we have to avoid speeding cars. It's also tiring to have to weave in and out of the traffic.'

He also shares that the number of puncture shops has reduced considerably over time. If a bicycle breaks down, cyclists are forced to make repairs themselves. He also complains about the rising cost of bicycles. 'In 2008, I bought a bike for Rs6,000 and spent another Rs8,000 on improvements and decoration. Nowadays, a single bicycle costs at least Rs12,000.'

### 3.14 Rizwan: rent-a-car driver

Rizwan's parents migrated from India in 1947. He spent his childhood and early youth in Block I of North Nazimabad. His father's cloth business prospered until 2004 when he was forced to close down. That is when Rizwan started his rent-a-car business. He now lives in Korangi.

Since his family business was very different, I ask him why he chose this business. It comes down to his passion for cars. Rizwan bought three cars with the residual money after his father's business closed down and borrowed another four cars from his friends to assemble a fleet of seven cars. From his office at Nagan Chowrangi, he used to rent out a car for Rs700 or a car and driver for Rs1,200 per day in 2004. People hired these cars for family events such as weddings and picnics, and also for religious and other festivals.

Describing his clients, he says they belong to diverse backgrounds. 'But I can tell you who my clients are not. I choose not to lend my cars to youngsters for two simple reasons: they behave like gangsters and drive carelessly,' he explains.

If he faces any problems, he chooses not to discuss them. 'Things have run very smoothly until now. It is because I follow two golden principles: ignore and tolerate. You won't believe that I have never been to the police station for the entire span of my business.'

I ask if there is a considerable security risk in his line of business. He agrees. 'There is and that is why I am very selective in who I lend my cars to, as I don't know for what purpose they could be used. As a precaution, we ask for the client's original National Identity Card and a personal reference. The security situation of the city has adversely impacted this business,' he admits.

I ask him to describe the traffic situation in Karachi from his point of view. He is in favour of the underpasses and flyovers as they reduce the time of commuting over long distances. However, he criticises people's attitudes the most. 'Most traffic problems are caused by educated but disrespectful and intolerant drivers. You can see the educated people in flashy cars using mobile phones while driving,' he says. 'Clients used to be respectful and honest in their dealings. The new crowd is rough and lacks manners. However, I have observed that more people make way for an ambulance now than in the past. I think that awareness has increased in this regard.'

He also feels alarmed by the rising number of cars and other vehicles on the road. 'To the best of my knowledge, a staggering 400 vehicles are registered per day at the civic centre. It adds up to 120,000 new vehicles per year on the roads of Karachi,' he says. He feels the traffic police are corrupt and greedy and that CNG rickshaws and qingqis are a big nuisance. 'The drivers of both these vehicles are unaware of laws, they do not have enough engine power and on top of it, they use their pressure horns to bully other drivers. Also, old and dilapidated vehicles are still on the roads.'

The current state of his business is not encouraging. The company suffered because of his brother's inability to manage the business during Rizwan's brief sojourn in Saudi Arabia. Fortunately, he found a sub-contract to provide a pick-and-drop service to a local media house from II Chundrigar Road to the Buffer Zone. He says he has reserved two vans for this service. He drives one himself and has hired a driver for the other. After paying the driver's salary and the maintenance of the van, he saves Rs15,000 per month on the other van while the company provides petrol.

I ask if he still lends cars. 'Yes, I do, but business has gone down since 2006. Inflation has forced people to avoid hiring cars [...] Actually, business has gone down for everyone except for the psychiatrists,' he concludes.

### 3.15 Syed Sohail: banker

Syed belongs to the Urdu-speaking migrant community. His father was a government officer and despite financial constraints, he made sure all his children were educated. In the early days of his career in the Standard Chartered Bank, Syed provided car loans to customers. He disagrees that traffic problems in Karachi are a result of careless lending by the banks. He believes improper planning for infrastructure and poor maintenance of the roads is the real reason. 'As a banker I feel that car loans have actually supported the economy,' he says.

Describing the whole process of screening potential loan customers before lending to them, he tells me that banks discourage lending to owners of buses, mini-buses and other public transport vehicles. He says, 'This is necessary because the bus owners generally do not have the required documents and they also usually demonstrate a gangster-like behaviour in their dealings with us. Though there is no policy for denying loans to them, I admit that they are not favoured much.'

The method of verification in their cases is also more stringent,' he adds. Similarly, he shares that loans are also not provided to motorcyclists, however, there is no limitation on that. The required documents are a salary certificate, a verified bank statement and post-dated cheques for the tenure of the instalments before a legal contract is then signed.

I ask why they use this process, including charging high interest rates, which seem biased against the poor. He disagrees with my assessment. 'We are ready to provide loans for the qingqis as well. Our only demand is that the papers should be genuine and the motorcycle used for the qingqi is not stolen. So, it is not an anti-poor scheme,' he insists. 'You have to understand that lending is in the interest of the bank. However, your concern about the interest rates could be valid. Still, compare it with the market rates and also consider the fact that we also have to break even, at least, to cover our overhead costs,' he adds.

I ask him if banks provide loans to goods carriers as well. Syed says banks do lend to these customers though reluctantly. 'If you have observed, HinoPak Limited only manufactures the chassis. The container is installed by the buyer and that creates problems with us and with insurance companies as well. The containers are manufactured locally. We find it difficult to determine the real price and so do the insurance companies for calculating instalments or premiums,' he says. 'This is the [fault of the] goods-carrier mafia that failed the cargo-carrying services of Pakistan Railways [...] Earlier, 75 per cent of goods were transported through Pakistan Railways. Transporting goods by rail was much cheaper than trucks, which are a source of traffic jams.'

He feels that the banks did their best business during the Musharraf regime, between 2004 and 2005.

'Interest rates were low and people applied left, right and centre for loans. It is a rule of thumb that when interest rates are low, people start borrowing from the banks and when interest rates are high, people save more for higher returns,' he says.

Before we conclude, Syed again insists that banks have not caused the traffic issues of Karachi. 'It is the mafias and the public together: neither wants to observe the law.'

### 3.16 Rashid: car mechanic

Rashid belongs to an Urdu-speaking family. His parents migrated from India. They are settled in Sector 5-E, New Karachi. Rashid had a passion for driving that later became an interest in mechanics. He has five brothers and two sisters, none of whom belongs to this profession. Rashid completed his Diploma in Engineering from the Government Polytechnic Institute, SITE, Karachi. After that, he began learning on the job with an *ustad* at Anda Morr, Nagin Chowrangi on a stipend of Rs30 per day and food. He used to work for 8–9 hours a day.

Rashid was trained in repairing simple engines with plug-point and mechanical fuel-injection systems. In 2006, the market was flooded with EFI cars. That was when he decided to update his knowledge and joined the Honda Company. 'Honda does not have an assembly plant in Pakistan but they offer repairing services. So I was trained there and learnt a lot from my seniors. I worked hard to learn as much as possible,' he says.

He started working for the company on a salary of Rs2,800 per month. 'Out of that I used to spend Rs800 per month on transport while I brought food from home,' he says. 'At that time, I used to spend 1.5 hours on the road for the round trip to home.'

In 2013, Rashid left the company to start his own workshop. 'In 2013 I was getting a salary of Rs12,500 and people often told me how blessed I was and I shouldn't be taking the risk off letting go of this salary [...] But I had decided to take the risk and opted for my own set up. I was encouraged by my seniors who had established their own businesses.'

His initial difficulties included looking for a suitable place to rent at a reasonable rate. The monthly rent for his current place is Rs6,000 with Rs500 fixed charges for electricity. He also did not know anyone in the area so it was hard to find new customers. 'The initial six months were tough but with the passage of time, business started picking up,' he says. He has also hired two apprentices. He pays the older boy Rs250 per day and the newer one Rs50 per day.

His office hours used to be typical: 8.30am to 5.00pm. Now, he spends at least 11 hours a day from 10.00am to 9.00pm. 'But this is more rewarding and I am satisfied with what I get from here,' he says. Rashid

feels his situation would have been greatly improved had there been any arrangements for institutionalised and structured learning about the trade. 'I would have been saving time and earning more,' he says.

He observes that the volume of traffic has increased a lot. He suggests it might be because of the increasing population but also because of the relative ease of purchasing cars with bank loans. I ask him if he has felt a change in the attitude of his customers as well. He says he does. 'Thirteen years ago my clientele consisted of more mature people who purchased cars using hard-earned money and hence they valued their asset more. Now [...] car owners [...] are less sensitive about their car, human lives and the value of money [...] I also find people becoming more careless about speeding and driving more rashly, compared to before.'

The other traffic problem that bothers him the most are the qingqis. 'Those are good for the poor but they are the biggest impediment to smooth driving. They run slowly, occupy extreme right lanes, are always overloaded and are driven by inexperienced and young drivers. You can see how the recent ban on qingqis has slightly improved the traffic situation. Business for coaches and vans has improved [...] they profit the most from the ban,' he explains.

I ask him what issues affect his business directly. He complains of a lack of parking space. 'Parking is a major problem. We don't have a proper space where we can ask our clients to park their cars. As a result, we park on roads, designated footpaths and on street corners. If I had properly allocated parking, my business would increase.'

Are spare parts easily available, I ask? He informs me that spare parts are available more easily now than at the time he started working. 'More Chinese parts are available now. Additionally, parts known as 'kabuli' are also in abundant supply.'

He explains to me how the repair business has changed with these developments. 'Earlier, the *ustad* was interested in making repairs. Now the emphasis is more on the replacement of old or damaged parts because both the customer and the mechanic do not have time for meticulous work. It is also because of the fact that after replacing a part, the life of the car increases, and thirdly, people can now order parts from Dubai as well. We also have upgraded tools at our disposal so we are more comfortable with the variety of spare parts. For

instance, we now use oil filter spanner instead of chain sprocket to change the oil filter,' he says.

His suggestions for improving the traffic include withholding bank loans. 'Also, cars manufactured before 1985 should be taken off the roads. Two-stroke engines, diesel buses and qingqis should be completely banned. But most importantly, the road capacity needs to be increased,' he says. 'Traffic congestion has also affected drivers' attitudes. They are more impatient and aggressive now and express road rage with violence. They are probably suffering from continuous traffic fatigue.'

### 3.17 Sardar: cargo driver

Cargo transporter Sardar has experienced many shades of life. He owes a lot to his father for what he is today. He tells me how his grandfather opposed his father's decision to study which compelled him to migrate to Karachi from Matta, Swat just after the war of 1971. Initially, Sardar's father found accommodation with some other migrants at Tariq Road but later shifted to Manzoor Colony and built his own house.

A determined person who never shirked from hard work, Sardar's father studied in the mornings and drove a taxi in the evenings. Later, he bought a Suzuki cargo-carrier vehicle in partnership and saved enough money to buy another one. He worked diligently to market his services to various companies and by 1994, when his business had reached a comfortable level, he bought his first Mazda 3500 truck and began transporting goods upcountry.

I asked Sardar how he became involved in his father's business and what challenges he faces today. 'When my father bought the Suzuki vehicles, he recruited me as a driver,' recalls Sardar. 'As for the challenges, they are many. The congestion on the streets bothers us the most as it is difficult to drive on the bustling streets of Tariq Road, Liaquatabad, Nazimabad and old city areas. We have to wait for several minutes as people are not willing to make space for us on the road. Unavailability of parking space is another problem we are confronted with on a daily basis.'

Another problem is the rule that only trucks with number plates beginning with 'JU' are allowed on the road before late evening, which makes it difficult for cargo carriers to operate. 'In our slang, they are called "*cheh nutta*" or having six bolts.'

Moving to a rather sensitive topic, I ask Sardar if his Pashtun descent creates hurdles for him, particularly in different ethnic areas. 'Yes, they used to bother us a lot

and treat us as illiterate and poor,' says Sardar. 'But I want to tell you that I am no illiterate. I have a diploma in *hikmat* from the Hamdard University. Once, I was in an Urdu-speaking dominated neighbourhood in Malir 15 to drop a consignment of medicines there. The street was narrow and a push-cart vendor selling '*haleem*' had blocked the passage. I honked at him to clear the way. The seller waved his hand but made no attempts to move. When I honked for the third time, the *haleem* seller took out a gun from his wooden money box, ran towards me and put it to my forehead. I was forced to reverse my truck back onto the main road. But I feel the situation has improved a lot after the Karachi operation.'

I ask him if he has a fitness certificate for his vehicle. 'Yes, I do and we purchase it from the relevant department in Baldia Town. By purchasing I mean the agent charges some extra amount and delivers it to our doorstep.'

Among other challenges, transporters such as Sardar also have to deal with hostile police while on the road which can be problematic. 'These policemen are always looking to extort money from us,' says Sardar. 'Once, my other cargo-carrier driver was stopped by a traffic constable near Ayesha Bawani School at Shahrah-e-Faisal. After scrutinising all the documents he said that the fitness certificate was not duly stamped and the truck would be impounded. The driver had an altercation with the police officer and in a much-irritated state of mind he called me up so that I could speak to the police officer. I tried to convince him that it's a mistake by the government official and I would rectify it at the first possible convenience. He insisted on *challan* [receipt for payment] and I said to him, 'Go ahead, but I will ask the driver to park it in such a way that the entire artery of Sharah-e-Faisal gets blocked'. Since he was out for money he back stepped and the entire episode of half an hour was concluded in a Rs150 [£0.92] bribe to that constable [...] It's a routine affair [...] Sometimes they ask for documents and sometimes object to side mirrors. They just need money.' Sardar feels that all such policemen are looking for is money. 'They can let you go for as little as Rs50 so why should we waste time in arguing with them? You know that time is precious in this business.'

I observe that drivers and owners of larger vehicles are in constant conflict with car owners. When I ask Sardar why, he says: 'They [car owners] are the most intolerant people of all. If by any chance I drive into the extreme left-hand lane, they honk their horns, flash their headlights and when there is a delay in clearing the lane, they hurl abuse at us.'



However, Sardar and his colleagues are most comfortable when driving on highways. 'On highways, we feel like *'jesej machli paani maen aa jaae'* ['a fish in a pond']. Nobody bothers us except that excise people ask for tax documents which we usually have. We are much more relaxed on highways.'

I ask him if route permits are a problem during intercity or inter-province travel. 'Yes, we are required to have route permits of the relevant provinces to which we are carrying the goods.' Elaborating on the matter Sardar says, 'Since I am a resident of Sindh Province so a route permit for Sindh is not an issue and that's my primary document. Remember that all other route permits will be based on that primary document. My broker here in Sindh has contacts in all other provinces. So I take a picture of my Sindh route permit and WhatsApp it [send via mobile phone] to his contact, to let's say in Peshawar. My Sindh agent will call him and before entering Peshawar City I will get the route permit for KP, as made by the Peshawar agent. Peshawar police are very strict and if you don't have the permit they can fine up to Rs6,000 [£36.82] and could also confiscate the truck.'

I then enquire if problems are caused by delays in issuing route permits. 'No, we have alternative arrangements as well. If I don't get the route permit on time, I will stop the truck outside Peshawar and get a fake *challan* for Rs200 against my name by giving Rs400 to the constable. It looks absolutely original and we manage to get away with it with the authorities. Nobody bothers to verify that fake document.'

I also ask if highway breakdowns are a challenge. 'We usually have two drivers on long routes. One is an expert or *ustad* and the other is an apprentice. So in case of any mishap, one stays with the truck and the other searches for a mechanic. They are usually available at roadside hotels.'

As for the costs involved in intercity travels, I ask Sardar if a trip to Lahore could be exorbitant. 'Lahore's a five-day trip,' he says. 'The monthly salary of a senior driver is Rs14,000, so that is a fixed cost. We will spend approximately Rs3,000 on toll taxes since Rs150 is the toll tax for Mazdas and there are around 20 toll plazas (10 each way). While going to Lahore, the diesel costs us Rs21,000 and Rs19,000 on the way back to Karachi. The diesel costs on way back is less because the route is mostly downhill returning to Karachi, so less diesel is spent. Also, the truck is not loaded on its return and is much lighter,' says Sardar. 'If you include the cost of bribery to policemen, food, lodging, cleaning, shoe polishing etc. it comes to roughly Rs50,000 for a five-day trip.'

The challenges for truck drivers do not end there. There are also issues like security on highways. 'No security threats, really, but goods are stolen while the trucks are on the move,' he says. 'It usually happens at night. Big trucks do not have the facility of seeing exactly behind the container. So, the thieves taking advantage of the darkness of night attach a small vehicle to the container so the speed of both the vehicles are synchronised. Then one person unlocks the container and throws the items into the Suzuki pickup. A lot of containers are deprived of their goods by the same method. We now don't fix or weld the container with the chassis but rotate it 180 degrees through cranes so that the door of the container is blocked with the body of the truck, just behind the driver. That's the only solution as goods worth millions of rupees are involved. Also, the highways are in good conditions and are often smooth so there is no threat to the container itself,' says Sardar.

Lastly, the accidents need to be countered as well. 'Accidents happen no matter what you do,' says Sardar. 'Last month, a person was killed as my driver fell asleep near Kathore and struck a car. We tried to settle the matter without involving the police. The deceased person's family live in Tando Adam and he was the only family member earning an income. We gifted a qingqi rickshaw to his younger brother and provided some additional money for death rituals as well.'

According to Sardar, there is no official forum for the large-vehicle drivers to resolve serious situations or disputes but their experiences on the road hold them in good stead. 'As we have been in the profession for a long time, we know each other and also help each other. My father tried to form an association twice but failed.'

### 3.18 An anonymous ambulance driver

The ambulance driver refuses to share his name. His ambulance is parked near the Qatar Hospital in Orangi Town which is his duty station. He is officially barred from talking to the press about his employers, the Aman Foundation. This is a private organisation providing a paying service to the citizens of Karachi. The ambulances charge Rs300 to transport a patient to any of the government hospitals in the city. For every ambulance, three teams of three staff members each work in eight-hour shifts during a full day.

The 40 year-old has been driving an ambulance for the last eight years and has been through some gruelling times. The other two staff members of the ambulance are with him when we speak. I begin by asking him to

share the challenges he faces daily. His problem is an obvious one. 'First of all it is difficult to find a way in traffic as all the lanes are occupied by all,' he says. 'And if by any chance we get our way, we are usually followed by speeding motorcyclists and car drivers. They treat our clearing of the path as an opportunity to drive out of the rush quickly. But they don't understand that we have to constantly change lanes and we often have to apply the brakes abruptly. As a result, often they collide with us and cause damage to the ambulance as well as their own vehicle.'

I ask who gives him the most trouble on the roads. 'The youngsters,' he replies immediately. 'There is an entire new generation of wired youngsters who have headsets plugged in their ears and they don't listen or care less for the hooter of a rushing ambulance [...] They are insensitive to the emergency situation we deal with.' I ask if the traffic police help in such a situation. 'No, they are also insensitive,' he replies. 'They tend to ignore the sound of the siren and hooter. They just turn their faces away and regulate the traffic as usual.'

He finds Civil Hospital has the most difficult approach out of the three major hospitals: Abbasi, Jinnah and Civil. Lack of space makes it impossible to turn the ambulance, he says. 'The main reason is haphazard parking, primarily by para-transport vehicles.'

I ask him if the problem is limited to Civil Hospital. He says the problem extends to the whole city, 'You can see it on the main arteries as well. The newly constructed shopping plazas, high-rises and residential complexes are not very concerned about the parking of vehicles. Most of these places do not have any provisions for parking, the rest provide inadequate space.' He cites the example of the Golimar area where sanitary material shops and parked vehicles have occupied almost half of the main road.

He experiences other unusual problems too. I want to know how he deals with the patients' relatives during emergencies. 'At times, the relatives exhort us for speeding. I understand their position and their sentiments,' he says. 'Our staff includes doctors as well. Aman Foundation's is the only ambulance service which not only provides a transportation service but also medical care during the transportation of the patients. So the staff try to convince the relatives that the patient is getting the best possible first aid. Sometimes relatives help in assisting us in clearing a path amidst the traffic.' However, gunshot victims are a different story. 'It has happened quite a few times that the relatives of gunshot victims put pistols to my head to force me to hurry.'

One would think these episodes were the most difficult times for him. But, setting aside personal fears and threats, he thinks the real difficulties lie in the obstructions he has to face during political rallies, protests and sit-ins. 'These are the real challenges

for us. It takes us considerable time to find our way through these disturbances when every second counts towards someone's life,' he says. He makes a distinction for planned political rallies as the authorities usually prescribe alternate routes for these but taking an alternate route often means increasing the time it takes him to reach the hospital.

His other big problem is not related to traffic issues. He reports that when an ambulance brings a dead body to the hospital emergency room, the medico-legal officer at that particular hospital often tries to implicate or involve the staff in the police report. 'We do not want to be involved in legal matters,' he says.

The solution to Karachi's traffic problems is simple in his opinion. 'I think that a separate lane must be allocated for ambulances. I also think that traffic policemen on motorcycles should provide an escort to ambulances passing through their respective areas.'

### 3.19 Mohammad Saeed: CNG rickshaw driver

Mohammad's father used to work in Quetta, Balochistan as a police officer and brought him to Karachi when he was four years old. They settled in Baldia Town near Qatar Hospital where he still lives. Mohammad used to drive a three-seater then switched to driving a six-seater briefly, but soon returned to the three-seater. I ask him why. 'I did it because of the ban on the qingqis. If the administration does not want qingqis, why did they allow these to be manufactured in the first place? The assemblers and the marketers should be apprehended, so should those police officers who allow qingqis on the road.'

I ask him if that means qingqis are more profitable than CNG rickshaws. He says that rickshaws make profit in the initial days of the month when working-class passengers still have money from their salaries to spend. 'Qingqi is profitable all the year round because of being cheaper. For instance, it can take you from here to the Board Office for Rs20 only,' he explains. His main clientele are lower-income groups who pool money and travel in groups. The CNG rickshaw benefits the poor more, he feels.

In the customary absence of meters, the fare is determined by mutual consent though he feels that people are often unfair when setting a price for his service. 'They think in terms of distances, kilometres, and the cost of CNG. They do not bother to consider the expenses of a rickshaw's maintenance and the driver's need to feed his family. There is an extra Rs200 per day to be paid as extortion money too,' he adds.

The CNG rickshaws are accused of spoiling the traffic by moving slowly. Mohammad agrees. The weak chassis forces the drivers to go slowly and avoid the potholes. The rickshaws are always loaded to capacity with the weight of the CNG cylinder as well. 'As the CNG stations are not allowed to work all week, so the drivers keep the cylinders full in order to avoid wastage of time and long queues at the CNG stations,' he points out.

Mohammad tells me that if the rickshaw is rented, the driver has to pay Rs300 per day to the owner. Another Rs200 per day is spent on maintenance approximately. Buying the CNG for the day is also the responsibility of the driver. After all the expenses, his net income comes to around Rs500 in a day. 'You know it is difficult to run a household on that meagre amount,' he says.

Mohammad feels much safer in Karachi now in the wake of the Karachi Operation. But there are still plenty of unsafe places in town. 'In some areas like Kati Pahari, we have to climb up the slope and the rickshaw is forced to slow down; even a person on foot can rob us there. I usually avoid going to Pak Colony, old Golimar and some areas of New Karachi.'

I observe that car drivers usually do not like rickshaw drivers. He replies that the feeling is mutual. 'They irritate us too. They honk unnecessarily and push us to speed up, throw tantrums, shout abuse and give us dirty looks. They need to understand that we cannot speed because of the load and also because of the fact that the rickshaw will overturn if we are forced to brake suddenly while going at a high speed.' However, he adds that the new generation of CNG rickshaws are better than their predecessors, as they have disc brakes while the earlier rickshaws had washer brakes. The sudden application of brakes in those rickshaws used to tear the washers apart, he recalls.

He feels that the KCR rickshaws were better than CNG rickshaws in this respect. 'Keeping aside the issue of environmental degradation, the two-stroke combustion engine of KCR had power, so those rickshaws could be driven fast,' he explains. However, the capacity issues made those less lucrative, he feels. 'A CNG rickshaw can be used for seating up to six passengers and it can be hired for events like wedding ceremonies as well. It is cheaper for a family of six or seven persons,' he points out. 'Sometimes, three or four families book three to four CNG rickshaws to go to a wedding together. It is more economical than hiring a coaster for the same purpose,' he adds.

'A CNG rickshaw has a longer life as compared to the KCR but its spare parts are more expensive. A KCR's engine can be completely overhauled for Rs5,000 while it takes Rs10,000 to completely overhaul a CNG engine,' he adds.

Mohammad agrees that women face harassment from other commuters in CNG rickshaws and suggests installing curtains in rickshaws like the ones in Quetta and Peshawar.

## 3.20 Saeed: oil-tanker driver

Saeed is an Afridi Pashtun and hails from Darra Adam Khan. He migrated to Karachi about 25 years ago. Saeed drives a ten-wheeler oil tanker with a carrying capacity of 50,000 litre. His trips are mostly between Karachi and Peshawar, but he may go to other cities of Pakistan as well. He has been in this business for the last 10 years.

Saeed started driving trucks because he was fascinated by big buses and long-distance travelling since childhood. 'The huge body of the bus, the speed, the sound system and the design fascinated me,' he says. 'I also wanted to see Karachi as I had heard a lot about it. I used to travel with the elders of my area on tankers going from our area to Karachi. With time, I learnt the routes and the locations of various areas including Karachi.' He found Karachi to be full of opportunities but feels that Darra's culture is far more developed and superior.

I ask him if he is involved in the Afghan transit trade as it is supposed to be more lucrative. 'No. I must admit that Afghan transit trade is far more profitable than our business, but the Taliban kill people and we are scared.'

Saeed shares that a loaded truck from Karachi takes 40 hours on average to reach Peshawar, while an empty one takes 30 hours. The trucks are usually loaded from Karachi to Peshawar, so it takes longer. The tankers often return empty to Karachi.

I ask what items he carries on his return trip. 'Sometimes we pick up molasses from sugar industries or cooking oil to take to Karachi.' When he confirms that he means he carries cooking oil in the same tanker in which he carries industrial oil, Saeed hardly notices my surprise. 'We just rinse the container and use it for transporting molasses or cooking oil.'

I turn the conversation to the main challenges he faces on the streets of Karachi. 'Two main problems bother us,' he replies. 'Firstly, bikers and qingqis are big nuisances. They overtake us narrowly and often from the wrong side. These drivers have no idea that we cannot apply brakes abruptly as it would overturn the truck. Secondly, the volume of traffic is much higher in Karachi and for that matter in other big cities of Pakistan. That drives us crazy.'

Other people complain about tanker drivers as well, I remind him. He admits his fault, 'We often drive on the extreme right which is supposed to be the fast lane, and we obstruct the way for ambulances or other fast-moving vehicles. Still, this practice is more common in new drivers who have no knowledge of the laws and ethics of driving.'

Then he adds, 'The weather is also a big problem. In hot weather, the truck heats up like a furnace. We cannot afford to use air conditioning as it will raise our fuel consumption to the extent of making it unaffordable.'

The tankers are legally banned from entering the city during the day, but you can often find oil tankers on the streets at any time. 'You know how the system works here,' Saeed says. 'Officially, we are only allowed in the city between the two prayer times: *Isha* and *Fajar*. But if we bribe the policemen, we can enter any time.' I ask how much he pays in bribe usually. 'Between Rs200 and Rs2,000.' Saeed explains that it depends on the individual policeman and on the area. He is very conscious about documents and carries every original paper on his trips up-country; even then he claims to pay an approximate amount of Rs5,000 per trip.

'Sindh is the worst in terms of bribery. Here, we have to bribe the police mobile vans and the traffic police as well,' he shares. Sharing his experience of bribery in all provinces, he declares Khyber Pakhtunkhawa (KP) to be the least corrupt. 'I feel KP is much better than the Punjab and Sindh. These days, the police in KP are much more professional and honest. It has become difficult to even obtain a license in KP as they test you properly now. According to my experience, Sindh is the worst of all three provinces,' he states.

Things have been changing over the years, in his opinion. Trips are becoming less frequent. 'Earlier, we used to wait for hardly two days to receive an order but now sometimes it takes eight to ten days for a job to arrive,' he shares. The laying of pipelines to transport crude and refined oil is the main reason behind this shrinking business. 'If the pipeline network is extended to other parts of the country, we would become redundant,' he says.

In conclusion, I ask him if he wants to share anything else. He asks for taxes to be reduced. 'Just because of taxes, a single tyre costs Rs50,000 to Rs80,000 and a single tyre lasts no more than six months.'

## 3.21 Zaeem: water-tanker driver

Zaeem is from Kohat, KP and has been delivering water from tankers in Karachi for the last 10 years. He is a friend of Saeed and was sitting with us during Saeed's interview. He lives in Hijrat and parks his tanker close to his home, where a group of drivers have pooled money and hired a watchman to guard the parked vehicles. He informs me that old and discarded oil tankers are reused as bowzers and a single bowser costs Rs 1.8–2 million.

He takes water from a hydrant located in Garden East and from another one at Recksor. His tanker has a total capacity of 2000 litres. The price of the water varies from area to area. Sweet water is expensive as compared to slightly brackish water. For a bowser of 1000 litres, the price of sweet water varies from Rs3,000 to Rs5,000.

I ask him if driving a 2,000-litre tanker is difficult in Karachi. He says, 'It is difficult when the tanker is fully loaded. I am especially bothered by motorcyclists. They have no idea how difficult and dangerous it is to apply brakes to a fully loaded vehicle.' But tanker drivers are accused of rash driving as well, I insist. He agrees, 'When my tanker is empty, I do drive at speed on my way to the hydrant or home.' In order to avoid the traffic, most tanker drivers prefer to supply water at night between 9.00pm and 10.00am. 'After that I go to sleep,' he says.

Zaeem feels that the traffic volume has increased a lot compared to previous years. Haphazard construction has narrowed the streets and contributed to tanker drivers' difficulties. They are also not allowed to use underpasses. He feels that areas like the Defence Housing Authority, PECH Society and Gulistan-e-Jauhar are easy to drive in as their streets are wider and well-planned as compared to the colonies. He tells me to ask the authorities to broaden the roads.

The hydrants pay money to the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB). The tanker drivers bribe the police. The rate varies between Rs200 and Rs500. 'The *seth*<sup>101</sup> man always accompanies me in a tanker. The *seth* provides him money which he has to pay as bribe,' he says.

Zaeem feels that the business has decreased over the years because a lot of houses have dug wells or have bore holes. It is possible that the business of supplying water through tankers may finish entirely in the next 10 years or so, he thinks.

<sup>101</sup> Businessman, here the owner of the organisation.



## 3.22 Sajjad: medical doctor

Sajjad is a member of the Pakistan Medical Association and is Pashtun by descent. He specialises in public health. Being a self-made man from a modest background, Sajjad comprehends the challenges confronting Karachiites. His father served as a clerk in the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) while his mother was uneducated. And yet it was his mother who was the driving force behind Sajjad and his sisters acquiring a higher education.

Sajjad, who also practices privately besides being a PMA member, is perturbed by the alarming rate of increase in pollution in Karachi, which he says endangers lives. He makes a direct connection between traffic pollution and health problems. 'The vehicle fitness certificate is a saleable commodity. All public transport is unfit to be on the roads and causes pollution leading to diseases like pulmonary disease, asthma in children and chronic illnesses such as cancer.'

He finds Karachi and Islamabad to be the most polluted cities of Pakistan but for different reasons. Karachi is polluted by transport emissions and Islamabad with the pollen grains that produce allergies, he says. He says that trees are being ruthlessly chopped down while new trees are not being planted. 'The lungs of the city are not clean and the air-purifying mechanisms are being compromised.' These pollutants can be lethal. 'In the presence of exogenous material, the human body can tolerate and perform to a certain level but not after that. It starts reacting in a variety of ways.'

I ask him if he knows about CNG rickshaws being better than their predecessors, the KCRs. He says theoretically the CNG rickshaws are much better than KCRs but only if they are maintained properly. 'And that unfortunately is not the case, so they are adding to pollution,' he insists.

He says that the issue of poorly maintained vehicles is not limited to rickshaws. 'The rising price of petrol and state policy has pushed cars to switch to CNG, which is supposed to be environmentally friendly. However, the cars are also not maintained properly and emit fumes which are full of contaminants,' he observes.

But people live here at MA Jinnah Road in spite of the pollution and congestion, I interject. 'It is all about planning,' he says. 'After a day's hard work, people want peace and quiet. But circumstances force them to live here only because they know that schools are close by and work is not far away. So they prefer to sleep less comfortably, inhale toxins, just to spend less time on the roads and less money on commuting.' To combat problems like these, he suggests 'You must plan sub-cities like Bahria Town whose management has announced a bus service from Bahria Town to the central business district (CBD).'

He believes traffic is having a large impact on people's health and behaviour. 'High blood pressure is a long-term effect of high noise levels. Other psychological events occur as well. In the short term, behavioural changes can be observed and being intolerant is one of those. Air pollution also results in eye infections and other viral diseases. It worsens conjunctivitis. Air pollution is at the base of all dermatological problems and allergies.'

He thinks that these problems can result in economic and productivity losses. 'An asthma patient cannot climb the staircase and a patient suffering from cardiac illness needs to take more rest. Moreover, both have to spend time waiting for doctors/consultants, periodically. So at one level productivity declines and on another level, a considerable amount of money is spent on medical care.'

Is it harmful sitting in a vehicle or driving for long hours, I ask in view of the prolonged traffic jams in the area. He replies, 'Backache and body aches are common complaints in people these days and that is why the most frequently sold medicines are pain killers. In males, sitting for long hours also reduces their sperm count. Arthritis can also set in. Besides that, psychological effects include drivers becoming intolerant and violent.'

In terms of noise pollution, motorcycles and qingqis make a lot of noise but both are very popular. Sajjad believes this is because of convenience. 'If the state cannot provide the people with mass transit, they are going to invent their own solutions.'

He is critical of the role of the banks in the problem of traffic congestion on the roads. 'They have provided loans without any vision, any checks and balances and without any coordination with the planning and other similar departments. Actually, banks have seized the opportunity created by the social change in Pakistani society – the rise of an urban middle class who aspire to a better-quality of life,' he explains.

He also holds builders and property developers responsible, especially for the parking troubles in Karachi. 'The Sindh Building Control Authority asks for allocation of parking spaces as a condition for approving new building plans. The builders include these in the plans but they do not care in reality. After receiving their certificate, they alter the structure and make more money by selling the parking areas as "go-downs" or for building additional residences,' he alleges.

He further elaborates on the impact of traffic on health problems, 'A 2006–07 UNICEF study, of which I was a part, concluded that the traffic constables who stand on duty over the course of three to four years in congested spots fall prey to chest infections, allergies and dermatological problems. Their output declines

and they seek either early retirement or a post in an office environment.'

The role of the Pakistan Medical Association is limited to organising awareness walks and issuing statements against the timber mafia and other actors who are responsible for environmental degradation. 'I am not sure if this is a solution,' he says. 'People cannot escape the follies of the system but at least they should be aware of where they are heading.'

### 3.23 Kamran: environmentalist

Kamran believes he has an analytical mind and that his sound education background serves him well in his current job as an urban specialist (environment) at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). After graduating from NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi in 2011, Kamran studied for his Master's degree in the United Kingdom and taught there before returning to Pakistan.

I ask him about the complex transport system of Karachi. 'Well, it's a vast subject and let's start by saying that there is no mass transit system in Pakistan and in Karachi that can replace the exorbitant number of vehicles, so that's one reason of pollution in the air,' he says. 'Secondly, the ownership of a car or even a motorcycle is a part of socially upward mobility and is a status symbol, hence the glut.'

'There are other factors as well. After the ban on qingqis some two months ago, people had little choice but to purchase their own bikes and that's why you suddenly see an increased traffic density on the roads. The motorcycles have occupied and engaged all the roads today. Earlier, Qingqis actually supported the dilapidated bus system in Karachi and the masses were frequently using it for shorter distances in particular,' he observes.

Furthering his argument, Kamran insists that public transport in the informal sector has become expensive, comparing the cost of motorcycle with that of bus travel. 'The market today is flooded with Chinese bikes and you can now own a motorcycle by paying Rs1,500 as a down payment and Rs1,000 per month in instalments,' says Kamran. 'This is less than the monthly expense incurred on bus travel which comes to a minimum of Rs1,300, assuming there are 26 working days and Rs50 for each round trip from the working class areas to the central business district (CBD) and back.'

'Also, the buses are neither sufficient in number to cater to the commuting public nor are they in good condition and therefore the ill-maintained engines, because they are overloaded, consume more fuel and have more emissions which creates problems and cost a packet,' says Kamran.

Finally, Kamran makes a valid point when he says that although women in Pakistan are increasingly participating in public spheres, the designs of buses are still the same: there is more space for men but less for women which discourages them from travelling from by public transport.

I ask him if this scenario adds considerably to the growing pollution in Karachi. 'Yes, and besides pollution, it's a burden on economy as well. If we had a mass transit system that would take 20 per cent of the vehicles off the road, it will be a great contribution towards the national exchequer.'

Keeping in view Kamran's expertise as an urban environmental specialist, my next query is about the effect of pollution on built structure. 'Karachi, like every other city, has spatial limitations,' says Kamran. 'How many flyovers can one build? How many underpasses can one make? You cannot widen the roads further. The human population is bound to grow and thus the population of vehicles will as well; all the more reason that we should focus on a mass transit system. Pavements, footpaths and roundabouts are compromised, just to maximise whatever spaces are available for vehicles.'

In the light of his reply, my next question to Kamran is about the affects pollution is having on human health, especially in a scenario like Karachi's. 'The mode of conveyance and the difficulties in travelling do affect human health,' says Kamran. 'It results in a loss of productivity as more fatigue results in transport-related worries. Commuting is like breathing as it is an everyday activity.'

Finally, I ask Kamran whether the elite – those who own a car each or more – are really bothered about having a mass transit system. 'If they are not, they soon will be. The same elite will be a big proponent of mass transit very soon because they need the open spaces to run their luxury cars and SUVs [sports utility vehicles]. For me, the core issue is how to plan and coordinate amongst various urban institutions to improve the existing transport system,' he concludes.

## 4

# Conclusions and recommendations

The majority of the stakeholders' perceptions about the transport issues of Karachi are valid. Nonetheless, individual perceptions need to be analysed and connected and the following few lines attempt to make a larger picture from these individual snapshots.

The exponential increase in Karachi's population, the change in its demographic indicators, the spatial spread of housing and the geographical concentration of livelihoods opportunities demands a response from the formal transport sector.

The majority of working-class and lower-middle-class commuters rely on buses and mini-buses for their daily commute, which are relatively cheap compared to other modes of transport. However, bus services in the public sector are insufficient and informal-sector buses and mini-buses are not financially viable for these operators. The rising costs of spare parts and maintenance are two main impediments for making those feasible. The institutional failure of Karachi's authorities to maintain the road infrastructure also contributes to the cost of vehicle maintenance. The continuing devaluation of the Pakistani rupee against relevant foreign currencies is also a barrier to the upkeep of the public transport both in the formal and informal sectors.

When travelling on public transport is problematic, the desire to own a vehicle appears natural. However, many feel that the banks' uncoordinated lending for the purpose of purchasing cars has taken its toll on pavements, footpaths and roundabouts. In the fiscal

year 2013–14, Pakistan imported cars worth US\$145 million (IUCN Pakistan 2014). A considerable number of those have ended up in Karachi. Besides that, the local manufacturing of cars for the same fiscal year increased by 1.85 per cent (ibid).

The culture of walking has succumbed to the car culture. A desire for upward social mobility means that those who are not able to afford a car resort to motorcycles. Karachi's local market is flooded with economical Chinese motorcycles which can be obtained for a small down payment of Rs1,500 [£9.20] with easy-to-repay instalments of Rs1,000 [£6.15] per month.<sup>102</sup> Because of ever-increasing demands, local assembly of vehicles is also thriving. 'Import of completely knocked-down kits and semi-knocked-down kits (CKDs/SKD) for assembly of overall bikes rose by 22 per cent to US\$64 million in July 2014 – March 15 from \$52.5 million in same period last fiscal year' (Khan 2015b).

In the absence of convenient and sufficient pedestrian bridges, the signal-free corridors and speedways have become an issue for pedestrians, who have no other option but to cross those high-speed roads at dangerous spots. The shrinking roundabouts further add to their problems. The transport landscape is characterised by an absence of a mass transit system, institutional indifference towards improving conditions for pedestrians, the biased attitude of law enforcers against the preferred modes of travel used by low-

<sup>102</sup> See Section 3.23.

income groups, such as qingqis and rickshaws. The promotion of high-speed traffic corridors in development and planning and high rates of interest charged on loans by banks gives an impression that transport policy has an anti-poor bias.

The informal sector has responded to consumer demands for cheaper travel by introducing qingqis. Economically viable and convenient for low-income groups, these vehicles have increased levels of traffic congestion. Even a cursory glance at the roads of Karachi shows that after the recently imposed ban on the qingqis, the number of motorcycles on the roads is now increasing, although since the qingqi ban is a recent phenomenon it will take time to reject or substantiate this claim.<sup>103</sup>

The emissions from poorly maintained vehicles, congestion and longer travelling hours not only result in financial losses. They also have a negative impact on health and attitudes. A conservative estimate shows that due to congestion on the roads Rs 250 billion (£1.5 billion) is spent annually on fuel on just one of the main artery of Karachi, Shahrah-e-Faisal. If estimates are made for the whole of Karachi, the amount could be as much as Rs 400 million (£2.45 million) per annum (IUCN Pakistan 2014). Hypertension and road rage are also outcomes of the congestion, related to the increase in time spent driving. There have been no serious studies on road rage in Karachi, however, increasing incidents and daily observations suggest that patterns are emerging. The recent incident in which a famous national cricketer was shot at in Karachi is just one of many (Khan 2015b).

Mass transit seems to be the only viable option for reducing congestion on the roads. A rail-based system could cater for 5–6 per cent of the commuting public. Delhi's railway caters for 4.8 per cent and Bangkok's 3 per cent. But rail-based transit is expensive. Bus rapid transit (BRT) is comparatively cheap but cannot operate without subsidies. The 20km BRT track from Shahdara to Gujamata in Lahore charges Rs20 (£0.12) per person only because it receives a large annual subsidy of Rs 1 billion (£6.1 million) from the respective provincial government. If that amount were to be withdrawn, the fare for the same distance would cost Rs80 (£0.49) per person, and therefore unaffordable for many. For this reason, in the absence of a publicly subsidised mass transit transport system, the informal transport sector will remain essential to the poorer members of Karachi society (Hasan undated).

In the absence of a mass transit system, city planners must answer two questions. Will they facilitate the use of motorcycles and qingqis institutionally or curtail them and compromise the social realities of Karachi's masses? If answer is in favour of motorcycles and qingqis, how will that decision be institutionalised?

<sup>103</sup> See Section 3.23.



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The exponential increase in Karachi's population, the change in its demographic indicators, the spatial spread of housing and the geographical concentration of livelihoods opportunities mean increasing transport pressures. This paper is a series of case studies of stakeholder perspectives on Karachi's transport problems, available online only and linked to the Working Paper 'Responding to the transport crisis in Karachi', by Arif Hasan and Mansoor Raza. Readers interested in the policy challenges of Karachi's transport system should consult both papers.

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