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Remittance-sending among Pakistani taxi-drivers in Barcelona and Oslo: implications of migration-trajectories and the protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan

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Remittances to Pakistan have increased annually for the past decade, reaching 18 billion USD in 2014. This paper draws on interviews with Pakistani taxi-drivers in Barcelona and Oslo to analyze the implications of their differing migration-trajectories for remittance sending. The findings underscore the significance of length of emigration and location of family members, as key determinants of remittance-sending. Second, the paper explores intersections of remittance-sending and crisis, through analysis of the ways in which the protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan affects the motivations and practices of remittance-senders. Remittance-sending from Pakistani taxi-drivers in Europe is shown not only to be shaped by the usual determinants of remittances, but also by the protracted electricity crisis, mitigation of which is sought through remittances. We argue that while the protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan increases migrants' motivations for – and actual – remittance-sending, the fact that remittances are spent on costs associated with generators and means of fueling these, detracts from other uses, such as savings or investments. Remittance-sending in the context of the protracted electricity crisis – a 'constant crisis'–is revealing of how a clear distinction between normality and crisis can be hard to identify, as crisis becomes normalized.

Keywords: remittances; crisis; Pakistan; Europe; development

Introduction

A father abroad sends back 40,000 rupees monthly to his wife and children in Pakistan. In the context of the ongoing electricity crisis, as much as 10,000 rupees are spent on the maintenance of alternative electricity sources, a generator and UPS (uninterrupted electricity supply unit), and on fuel. When this considerable amount of expenses was not there, when there was no load shedding, nor electricity deficiency in Pakistan, this family could spend an extra 10,000 rupees for other purposes, such as paying the fee for a better college, investing in livelihood opportunities, or saving the money in case of future needs.[1]

Pakistan received a total of 18.4 billion USD remittances in the financial year 2014, the seventh largest amount of remittances any country received globally. Remittances play a major role in the economy and society of Pakistan, despite the fact that migrants make up just 4% of the Pakistani population (see e.g. Erdal, 2014; Hussain

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& Anjum, 2014; Luqman & Haq, 2015). This paper explores the perspectives and practices of remittance-sending among Pakistani migrants working as taxi drivers in Barcelona and Oslo. Drawing on our analysis, we emphasize the implications of different migration-trajectories, which are reflective of differences in migration flows to Barcelona (Spain) and Oslo (Norway). Furthermore, implications of the protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan on remittance-sending became evident through our research, and thus constitute a second analytical focus.

Remittance flows are of great significance for developing nations, such as Pakistan, since remittances to these countries amount to far greater volumes than foreign development aid and are almost equal to foreign direct investment (FDI) (Karunarathne & Gibson, 2014; Luqman & Haq, 2015). Remittance flows to Pakistan reflect Pakistani migration patterns, where the Gulf States are a major destination, together with the UK, whilst Pakistani migrants are scattered in smaller numbers across many European and Asian destination countries (see also Ooemen, 2015; Wickramasekara, 2015). While at the micro level, a single migrant may be responsible for the livelihood of a household, at the macro level, remittances provide much-needed foreign exchange, in the Pakistani case comprising over 60% of the country's total exports in 2010, and exceeding annual FDI (Irfan, 2011; Luqman & Haq, 2015). By 2015, remittances were almost equivalent to the volumes of Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. Punjab, the largest province by population, receives almost 70% of the total international remittance inflow, and approximately 50% of Pakistani emigrants originate from Punjab.

While power shortages are common in many developing countries, the electricity crisis in Pakistan has since 2007 had severe detrimental implications socio-economically on the country's development (Ellahia, 2011; Jamil, 2013; Jamil & Ahmad, 2010; Shabbaz & Lean, 2012). The practice of 'load shedding' has been going on since independence, but only at the severe scale seen today for the past decade (Aftab, 2014). The reasons for Pakistan's electricity crisis include the high cost of electricity generation from imported oil, circular debt, management challenges, electricity theft, and issues related to politics and governance (Aftab, 2014; Shabbaz & Lean, 2012). These are set within a context of extreme increases in the number of electricity consumers, related to urbanization, continued high fertility rates, and village electrification projects. The lack of electricity is having a profound effect on industry, on the public sector, as well as on individual's everyday lives (Lodhi & Malik, 2013). In practical terms, all year round, the urban center Karachi may experience 12 h of load shedding per day, whereas rural zones experience up to 20 h long electricity cuts (Aman et al., 2013), with severe implications for everyday life and businesses alike.[2]

We explore the intersections of migrants' remittance-sending from Barcelona and Oslo with the ongoing electricity crisis in Pakistan. Through this, on the one hand, the ways in which remittances may serve to lessen the human costs of detrimental developments in migrant origin societies are foregrounded. On the other hand, the flip-side is that remittance-spending on the mitigation of detrimental developments, arguably has the potential to detract from remittance-spending that might have served developmental purposes, whether in terms of material or human investments.

Migration and crisis have become a 'routine association' (Lindley, 2014), with particular emphasis either on 'crisis migration' from an emigration perspective, or on the 'migration crisis' from an immigration perspective. The normalization of crisis, which Hammond and Lindley describe as 'constant crisis' in the context of Somalia (2014), is also relevant to our analysis: the idea of a 'constant' or 'protracted' crisis, where crisis itself becomes normality. While the electricity shortages in Pakistan could not be

described as a crisis at the outset, their protracted nature and salient effects on Pakistani industry and society have resulted in a situation of crisis. The case of the Pakistani 'protracted electricity crisis' raises overarching questions about the nature of crisis in temporal terms – as something which is not a one-off, critical event, limited to a period, but instead a protracted situation. The low intensity of what is commonly described as 'the electricity crisis in Pakistan' also raises questions about the limits to what should be described as crisis are. Our approach in this paper draws heavily on the bottom-up perspectives of Pakistani migrants in Europe.

In our analysis of remittance-sending among Pakistanis taxi-drivers in Barcelona and Oslo, we focus first on the implications of migration-trajectories for remittance-sending, and second, on the implications of the protracted electricity crisis for migrants' motivations for and actual remittance-sending. We start by setting out the conceptual backdrop for the analysis, which is followed by a presentation of the methods and data used.

Remittances-sending and the implications of crisis

The literature on remittances discusses motivations for sending remittances, based on a number of distinct starting points, among which there is a clear divide between the quantitative and the qualitative literature (for a substantive discussion, see Carling, 2014). While the latter sets remittance-sending in particular socio-cultural, economic and political context at the individual and family level, the former is often connected to theoretical underpinnings related to the migration project itself. Among these in particular neo-classical economic explanations, and those associated with New Economics of Labour Migration, merit mentioning.

For neo-classical economists migrants' motivations to remit are tied to the migration project, which is a target earner project, ultimately ending with return migration. The unit of analysis is the individual, and wage differentials between different contexts play a key explanatory role for understanding migration flows and remittance-sending. As a response, proponents of the New Economics of Labour Migration model (see e.g. Lucas & Stark, 1985), placed individual migrants within the context of their household, when trying to understand the motivations behind remittance-sending. Remittances are understood within the framework of a breadwinner migrant, remitting his earnings back to his household, as their primary source of income. In both models, however, motivations for remitting money back home, at the individual level, are understood as altruism, self-interest, or a moderate form of self-interest. These descriptions of migrants' motivations for remittance-sending echo findings from qualitative ethnographic studies of remittance-sending, although motivations here tend to be described using other words, such as solidarity, obligation, or duty (Åkesson, 2011; Carling, 2014; Guarnizo, 2003; Rahman, 2010).

The theme of remittances and crisis is one which has mainly been written about in in the context of conflict and humanitarian crisis (see e.g. Horst, 2008; Lindley, 2013; Martin, Weerasinghe, & Taylor, 2014) and of natural disasters, such as earthquakes or tsunamis (Le De et al., 2015; Mohapatra, Joseph, & Ratha, 2012; Suleri & Savage, 2006). The global financial crisis has also been discussed in relation to remittance-sending, with remittances to some countries being hit more severely than others (Sirkeci et al., 2012), Pakistan being among the countries where remittances have increased year-on-year throughout the financial crisis (Amjad et al., 2012). Overall, remittances have been found to function in a counter-cyclical way in times of crisis: the volume of remittances rises (Ahmed, 2012; Mughal, 2013), as remittance-senders want to support

their loved ones even more in times of crisis (see also Le De et al., 2015). Remittances have played a role with regard to economic crisis in different contexts, intertwined with how the state does (or does not) function in a given case, as well as with the duration of economic crisis (see e.g. Blue, 2004 for a discussion on Cuba).

The determinants of remittances in crisis as opposed to in non-crisis situations have not received much attention. However, in analysis of remittance-sending to Somalia and Pakistan from migrants in Norway, Carling, Erdal, and Horst (2012) found that the differences between remittance-senders in terms of motivation were often more of degree than of nature. While the violent conflict in Somalia has been going on for several decades, Pakistan has experienced decades of political instability, small-scale violence, and since 2009 internal conflict in the northern region of FATA. For Somali remitters, crisis could often be critical, necessitating, and immediate response. By contrast for Pakistani remitters, needs tended to be more planned and foreseeable, although there were some exceptions to this. The protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan is a case in point, where additional remittances – and costs at the receiving end – did not occur in a dramatic context, with sudden ruptures to everyday life. Rather the electricity crisis is a protracted situation which has gradually sifted into the mundane nature of contemporary everyday life – thus becoming a factor which can be foreseen and planned for with regard to remittances and their use.

Remittances in crisis contexts thus tend to be analyzed in relation to shocks (Damon & Wisniewski, 2014) such as natural disasters (Le De et al., 2015), or in the context of violent conflict. However, the focus on one-off shocks, whilst capable of capturing remittance-behaviour in response to events such as earthquakes, seems less suited to analyze the often protracted nature of crisis, whether in the case of man-made crisis, such as violent conflict, or in a case such as the protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan.

The comparative analysis of remittance-sending from Pakistani taxi-drivers in Barcelona and Oslo in this paper builds on insights from previous studies of remittance-sending in the context of crisis, and existing literature on motivations and determinants of remittances, based on both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis (see e.g. Carling, 2014; Erdal, 2012, 2014; Page & Mercer, 2012; Rahman & Fee, 2012). The context of a protracted, man-made and non-violent crisis, which has severe consequences at different levels in Pakistani society, and for the everyday lives of ordinary people, is appropriate for exploring the ways in which remittances function as a cushion that enables families to pursue strategies to overcome a crisis, such as the energy cuts.

Understanding the broader cultural embeddedness of remittances beyond a narrow economic framing is necessary. In her study of remittances among Bangladeshi male migrants in New York Stefanovic-Fenn (2014) finds that the reasons why remittances to Bangladesh, much as to Pakistan, did not decrease during the global financial crisis of 2008–2009, lie in a combination of familial obligations, cultural and religious practices, as well as pragmatic considerations about sustaining status and position across one or more locations in a transnational social field. Insights from analysis of remittance-sending among Bangladeshi men in New York, echo previous findings on socio-cultural and religious contexts, as key to understanding remittances also in the Pakistani context (see also Erdal, 2012,2014; Le De et al., 2015).

The comparison of Pakistani taxi-drivers in Barcelona and Oslo provides an opportunity to explore temporal dimensions of remittance-sending, and the salience of different migration trajectories and immigration contexts for remittance-sending motivations and practices (see also Mahmoud, 2015; Ooemen, 2015). Perhaps the most common temporal hypothesis with regard to remittance-sending is the so-called

'remittance decay' hypothesis, which suggests that remittances will usually decrease over time, as migrants' commitments and obligations back home decrease, either as a result of family reunification, death of parents, or as targets set for remittance-spending are reached (Carling, 2008; Grieco, 2004). As the migrant communities in Barcelona and Oslo differ quite radically in terms of the average length of stay, the similarities and differences between taxi-drivers with a short and a longer stay are highly relevant.

Beyond the length of stay and the 'remittance decay hypothesis' there are other temporal dimensions to migrants' remittances, which may also be connected with their migration trajectories and entry-routes into these two European cities. Therefore migration trajectories, together with duration of stay, will be analyzed as integrated dimensionswithin migrants' remittance-sending motivations and practices, set within the context of the electricity crisis in Pakistan.

Methods and data

The data this paper builds on was collected in Barcelona in Spain and Oslo in Norway. Barcelona, the second city of Spain and the capital of Catalonia, hosts the second largest Pakistani community of any European city, outside the UK. The size of this Pakistani community is estimated to up to 35,000, mainly male. The size of Pakistani community in Norway, including children and grandchildren of Pakistani migrants, born in Norway, counts approximately 38,000 individuals, estimated to be the fifth largest Pakistani community in Europe. Oslo, the second fieldwork area of the present study, is the capital city of Norway, where a majority of the Pakistani-origin population in Norway lives.

The fieldwork was conducted in 2013, using ethnographic methods, mainly participant observation and interviews. The group of taxi-owners and drivers was selected in order to be able to keep one factor in recruitment constant, between the two different European cities. The interviews were conducted in the Pakistani languages Urdu or Punjabi, and cultural ethics were carefully adhered to during the interviews, among other by formally addressing elders as 'bhai' in Urdu or 'Payijaan' in Punjabi, meaning 'big brother', to give proper respect.

Recruiting research participants in Oslo was different to Barcelona, although gate keepers among taxi-drivers were involved in both contexts. Data collection in Oslo was conducted during Ramadan (during which Muslims fast). All the interviews in Oslo (17) were conducted at 'Iftaar' dinners among taxi drivers in Oslo. In Barcelona, recruitment happened with some help of gate keepers (6 interviews), while the remaining interviews (9) were based on recruiting taxi-drivers randomly from taxi stops in central Barcelona. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and later translated into English.

The paper draws on interviews with 32 taxi-drivers. The sample consists of males only, which is reflective of the fact that there are virtually no female Pakistani taxi-drivers in Barcelona or Oslo. With regard to analysis of remittance-sending to Pakistan, the limitation of only having male perspectives should be contextualized with regard to the highly gendered field of remittances in the Pakistani context. Although the bulk of Pakistani migrants in Barcelona are men, in Oslo the Pakistani-origin population is far more gender balanced, and there are interesting perspectives pertaining to remittances sent by and to women (for a discussion on gender and remittances in the Pakistani context, see Erdal, 2012).

Among research participants in Norway, the majority had their wife and children in Norway, and many also had substantial parts of their families in Norway (siblings, parents, in-laws, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, and nieces). Remittances were usually sent to remaining family members in Pakistan, most often to parents and remaining siblings, but also to uncles and to cousins. In only 5 of the 17 cases the remittance-sender in Norway was the only source of income for the remittance-receiver in Pakistan. By contrast, in the Spanish context, most research participants only had one or more siblings abroad, often in another European country, while 5 said that they did not have any other family members abroad. One research participant's wife and children were Spanish citizens, but were living permanently in Pakistan. Among research participants in Spain, remittances were generally sent to both spouse and to parents, but also to siblings. In more than half the cases, remittance-senders in Spain were the sole source of income for remittance-receivers in Pakistan, reflecting the fact that much of these remittances were sent by the spouse and breadwinner of his household.

The subsequent section presents data which introduces the interviewees in Oslo and Barcelona first with regard to their migration trajectories, and the implications of these for their remittance sending. Second, on this backdrop, we analyze the intersections of remittance-sending with the protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan.

Migration trajectories and remittance-sending

The migration trajectories of interviewed Pakistani taxi-drivers in Barcelona and Oslo are illustrative of the broader trends in migration trajectories of Pakistani communities in the two cities, and of difference between Northern and Southern Europe as destinations for Pakistani migrants. The majority of interviewed Pakistani taxi-drivers came to Norway as a result of marrying their cousins, or another relative, whom their parents arranged a marriage with. As a result, Pakistani taxi-drivers mainly have their wives and children in Norway. By contrast, a majority of Pakistani taxi-drivers interviewed in Spain did not have their wife and children with them in Spain. This is associated with their migration trajectories and modes of entry into Spain, predominantly on tourist visa's or without authorization (see Table 1).

The main reasons for the large difference in the number of Pakistani taxi-drivers' who have family members abroad are a combination of geographic distance, immigration policies, and existing Pakistani communities in particular countries. To illustrate the strict immigration policy of Norway, most interviewees at some point referred to a shared perception: 'nowadays, you can only enter Norway either through marriage or by being a Molvi [an Islamic priest, in Urdu]'. Comparatively, the more lenient immigration policy of Spain means that legal status in Spain is obtainable. This was common-knowledge among interviewees, and shaped decision-making about migration destinations.

Table 1. Mode of entry to Norway or Spain for the interviewed Pakistani taxi-drivers.

	On a tourist visa	Marriage-migration	Work permit	Family reunion	Study visa	Irregular status
Immigration to Norway	3	7	2	4	1	–
Immigration to Spain	8	–	3	1	–	3

The mode of entry to Norway or Spain has considerable effects on how and what the interviewees managed to accomplish within a certain period of time after arrival. For those arriving in Norway, a majority had their spouse to take care of them, support them financially, and guide them through the process of getting a job. For those in Spain, the majority could not get well-paid jobs, nor support their families in Pakistan easily. Few of them could access social benefits, and few were able to apply for family reunification visas for their wives and children, at least not till after the three year period of irregular status was over. However, as most interviewees had been abroad for longer periods of time (see Figure 1), they were found to be relatively well-established.

Key constitutive factors in migrants' motivations for remittance-sending include the duration of time spent abroad, whether family members were living together with migrants in Norway or Spain, whether remittances were the sole source of receivers' income, and the senders' migration trajectory. Despite their relatively longer stay in Norway, the total per month remittances sent from Norway on average was 3700 euros, which was half the monthly amount, on average of 7356 euros, that was sent from Spain (see Figure 2).

The Pakistani taxi-drivers in Norway earn more than those in Spain, despite having the same profession. Yet they remit a smaller part of their incomes (see Figure 2). Hadier[3] (N1) and Ibrar (N2) are exceptions here, as they have low incomes, due to the irregular nature of their employment, not as taxi drivers. Their considerably lower incomes do not allow them to save large proportions of their incomes to be able to remit more. This echoes previous studies indicating that among Bulgarian migrants in Spain, legal status was a more significant predictor of remittance amounts, than length of stay (Markova & Barry, 2006). While both Hadier and Ibrar entered Norway legally (cf. Table 1), since then their status has become irregular, with no apparent routes to regularization available in Norway.

Whether family members live with the remittance-sender abroad is crucial for understanding the differences in remittance-sending behavior. Those who did not have their families with them abroad were highly motivated to remit larger amounts, despite their lower incomes. This can be understood in the context that these were largely the sole breadwinners of their households in Pakistan. Considering the regular and irregular migration trajectories, the key difference is that Pakistani taxi-drivers in Norway have

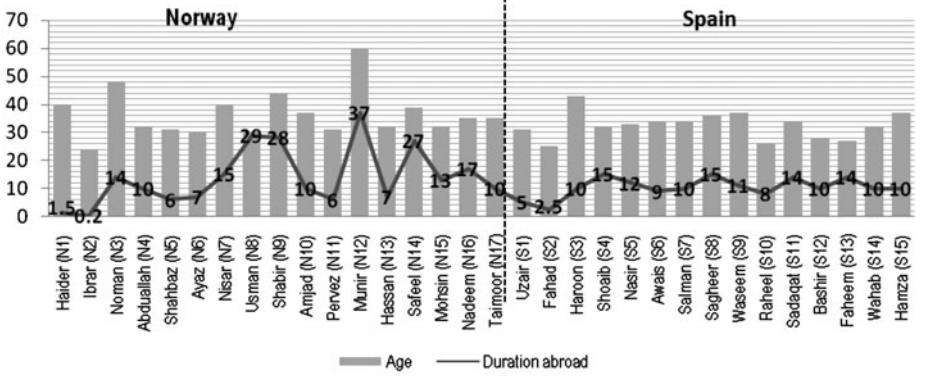


Figure 1. Age at time of interview, and length of stay in Norway or Spain (all names used in this paper are pseudonyms).

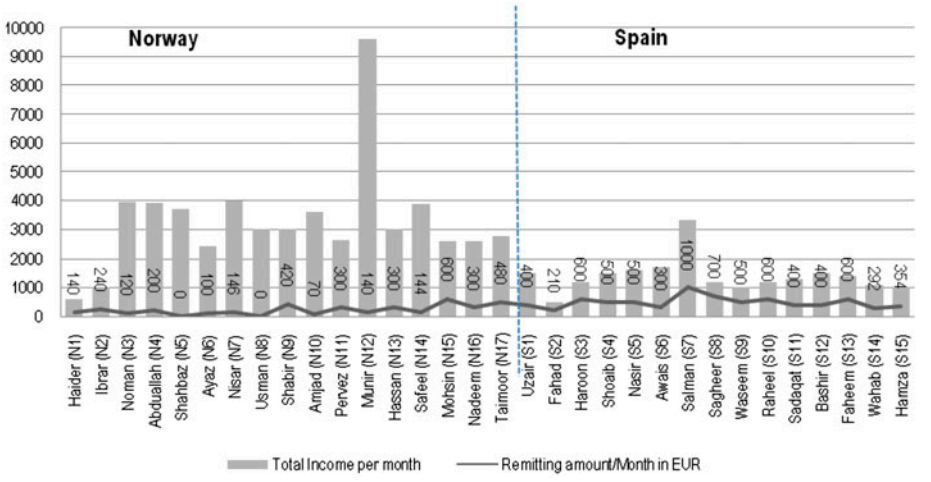


Figure 2. Interviewees' reported total incomes and reported remittances amounts (euros).

more family members abroad, than those in Spain. All the interviewees in Norway, except Hassan (N13), have at least one relative abroad in Norway, whereas almost half of the Pakistani taxi-drivers interviewed in Spain do not have any kin overseas.

Among the interviewed taxi-drivers in Norway 11 remit to receivers who have other sources of income, besides remittances sent by the interviewed taxi-driver. This is indicative of the fact that smaller amounts of remittances from migrants in Norway are sufficient for the household, as these households have other income generating strategies, besides this particular remittances-flow. By contrast, for the six interviewed taxi-drivers in Norway with the sole responsibility for guaranteeing an income for their household in Pakistan, the scenario was very different.

The interviewed taxi-drivers in Spain earn approximately half the amount of those in Norway. However, these migrants in Spain remit a more substantial proportion of their incomes than those in Norway. This is because a majority of these interviewees are the sole providers for the remittance-receivers they are sending money to. Similar to what was found in the Norwegian case, among those who are not the sole providers for a household in Pakistan, remitted amounts constitute lower proportions of the monthly income. However, there is an exception to this, Fahad (S2) who remits a very high proportion of his income, despite not being the sole provider for a remittance-receiving household in Pakistan. In Fahad's case this is explained by the fact that he is working irregularly, and not as a taxi driver. He has the smallest income of all the interviewees. Despite his small income, he is sending a lot of money, which should be understood in the context of his obligation to share the burden of remittances with his older brother. Fahad moved to Spain from England to unite with his brother, without a regular status. At this point, his brother was the only one remitting to their father in Pakistan. Once Fahad started to earn money, he willingly began to share the burden of remitting with his brother, which has made it very hard for him to meet his own expenses in Spain.

Pakistani taxi-drivers migration trajectories, combined with their legal status, and whether they have their wives and children with them abroad, and whether they are the sole source of income for a household in Pakistan or not, form the backdrop for the

following analysis of the intersections of remittances and the protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan.

Remittance-sending and implications of the electricity crisis

The context of the protracted electricity crisis was one all interviewees reflected on and discussed at several levels, including societal and political dimensions in Pakistan, but also with regard to their own remittance-sending practices. The vast majority of our interviewees (26 of 32) felt that the electricity crisis, and in particular the practice of load shedding had an impact on their lives as migrants, in a number of indirect ways. While there was an equally strong sense of the electricity crisis among the interviewed taxi-drivers in Barcelona and Oslo, there was a substantial difference in the ways in which the impacts of the electricity crisis were felt and expressed. This ranged from indirect implications with regard to sustaining transnational ties with Pakistan among migrants' children, to psychological distress for migrants' whose families were at risk as a result of lacking electricity provision. There were also more fundamental questions about what remittances should be spent on, and a dissatisfaction with the fact that rudimentary developmental infrastructure – such as access to electricity – was not provided to the Pakistani population by the state.

At an overarching level, most research participants blamed the Government of Pakistan for the extremely long load shedding spells. Haroon (S3) noted that: '(…) the real person to be blamed for load shedding, I conceive, is Mister Musharraf!' Whereas Noman (N3) said, '(…) Government officials, in order to preserve their own seats, did not even work a little on the load shedding issue'. The majority of research participants referred to corruption as a key challenge revealed through the electricity crisis, as the government has failed to build hydropower dams, and it has not reimbursed the bills of the electricity supplying entities, leading to a debt-crisis, which fuels the electricity crisis (see also Jamil, 2013).

Research participants were bewildered by the lack of action on the part of the government, though this is tempered by assumptions about why this inaction continues, as Salman describes:

> … Government officials' have some personal, under the table interests, due to which they only sign agreements with such companies that can grant their [official's] personal benefit, such as taking commission [bribes]. Interviewer: And then what happens? Salman: Obviously, the economy, because of this, it is affected one hundred percent. If there is no supply of electricity, then industry shuts down, laborers sit idle, while the stoves in their homes have also been shut down. The business man is not getting revenues, and … industry is also transferring to other countries …

In Salman's understanding, corruption is the clear reason why the government does not address the challenges of the electricity crisis adequately. Furthermore, he reflects on the effects – from the individual, through the industrial, to the societal level, describing the ways in which the protracted electricity crisis is crippling and deteriorating the development prospects of Pakistan.

In the Norwegian context research participant's immediate reflections about the direct effect of the electricity crisis for themselves – beyond their reflection on Pakistani society overall – were associated with challenges with sustaining transnational ties through return visits. While these were seen as minor challenges, as compared to those faced by people resident in Pakistan, the fact that the electricity crisis is protracted, and

return visits are postponed, means that children of migrants do not visit till they are older, and it is assumed are to be able to handle summer heat without constant electricity provision. For migrants' this raises concerns about the implications for post-migration generations' ties with Pakistan. This raises a sense of concern and of loss among migrant parents, indicative of ways in which the electricity crisis in Pakistan also has indirect consequences among overseas Pakistanis.

Among the interviewed migrants in Spain, the most significant indirect effects of the protracted electricity crisis were distress and concern for their families, as described by Waseem (S9):

> You see our family is living there, our parents are living there, and our siblings are there and obviously when they get affected, then we also, I mean, get affected indirectly. I am constantly tense. You see my relative's son who is very young and perfectly healthy; they say he is suffering from Malaria or, maybe from Dengue, as he was bitten by a mosquito. This is because of load shedding, because there is no electricity, the fan does not work during the night, so mosquitos get the chance to bite. (…) I have a three year old kid and I continuously warn my wife to take proper measures, such as to make sure the fan is turned on during the night, so that the mosquitos and any other risks can be taken care of. When the electricity is gone during night, the numbers of mosquitos increases. So, yes, it affects us [the remittance-senders] for sure, we feel it!

Interviewees in Spain testified to being worried about the hardships of their families which result from load shedding. This distress in particular occurred in instances when interviewees found their wives and children in a state of panic. The fact that an ongoing electricity crisis may cause distress, among those directly affected, as well as their close family members who are not physically present, echoes previous findings about the psychological distress resulting from electricity crisis.

The implications of the electricity crisis for the migrants' we interviewed, also had direct implications for their remittance-sending. Two sets of implications were identified, where both resulted in a pressure to increase the amount of monthly remittances sent for the specific purpose of covering electricity costs. First, load shedding necessitates the use of alternative sources of electricity generation, and due to high prices, maintenance charges, and the fuel cost of these sources, the monthly expenditure of the household increases – an increase which the remittance-sender (in the discussed cases) is obliged to cover. Second, scarce supply and high demand on electricity leads to an increase in the prices of electricity (despite shortages), which also raises the household's monthly expenditure. Consequently, a majority of the remittance-senders had increased the amount of remittances they sent, as a response to increasing expenses for electricity related purposes, as explained by Sagheer (S8): '(…) the generator itself cost me 40,000 rupees, it is expenditure in itself!' However, the problem was not only to finance these extra costs, but also to afford the high monthly maintenance charges. Nasir (S5) from Spain pointed out:

> (…) for petrol in the generator, obviously, the remittances are required! The UPS' batteries malfunction after sometime and have to be replaced! Then more remittances are obviously consumed! (…) I have to remit 15,000–20,000 rupees for other daily expenses whereas, because of this load shedding, 10,000 rupees for only electricity! (…)

The households to which our 32 interviewees were sending remittances in Pakistan were all using alternative sources for electricity generation. As remittance-senders finance the

cost of this equipment, most of the remittance-senders had increased their working hours, whereas a few stated that they were already working to their maximum potential.

Similar dynamics were at work with regard to the need for extra funds to cover the cost of increased electricity bills. The interviewees from Norway narrated this more strongly than those in Spain. Their reactions and comments are in-part about the effect of increasing costs and implications for remittance-sending, and in part related to their own efforts to understand why the electricity bills were increasing, in the context of frequent and extensive load shedding intervals. They felt as if they were buying smoke in return for their hard-earned incomes.

Some interviewees were very clear that increasing the volumes of remittances was an active strategy to mitigate the detrimental effects of the protracted electricity crisis. Remittances were seen to enable receivers to fund and sustain expensive alternative electricity sources and high electricity bills. This allowed households to continue a relatively smooth running of their daily lives, which would otherwise have been impossible, as Shabir (N9) from Norway explained:

> We have a generator and how do you call it? mmm … yes, UPS! Yes, we have UPS too (…) they are of a good standard, as the hard times of load shedding are managed quite nicely. The generator starts automatically (…). When the light goes [the electricity is cut off] then trrr … trrr … and the generator starts.

As a consequence of the electricity crisis, our interviewees reflected on how substantial proportions of their remittances were spent on covering electricity related expenditure, rather than being saved, invested, or spent for other purposes. This was further compounded as the electricity crisis creates conditions which are unfavorable for investment – even if the money for this was to be found – as Mohsin (N15) points out:

> … let me give you an example if I, I mean, am planning to open a factory, then I will have to think from where I will satisfy the need for electricity or gas …

The change over time, since before the electricity crisis, was noted by Pervez (N11) who said that:

> … Previously, these people [remittance-senders] used to invest there; in Pakistan, but now they don't, considering that there is no security there; your one lakh or two lakh (lack = 100,000) investment has no security, it may be wasted or not. Realizing this, all those people are now moving; total industry of ours, it is moving out. There are many reasons for this, such as security, […] and load shedding.

Research participants underlined that the prospects for meaningful investments in the current Pakistani context seem very limited to them. These reflections are clearly also connected with the lack of trust in the Pakistani government, in particular connected with frustrations with corruption among the political elites. Thus, the protracted electricity crisis, substantially affects remittance-sending, as a pressure to increase the amounts of remittances, and as a purpose for which substantial proportions of remittances are spent on, with the implication that there are other purposes for which remittances are *not spent*. These reflections echo concerns in debates about migration and development, where the responsibility for development laid on migrants' shoulders is being questioned (Bakewell, 2008). The basic responsibility for development is essentially the state's own, and should remain so, whereas migrants' through among other remittances can

contribute positively, if and when infrastructures that enables and accommodates these contributions is in place (de Haas, 2012). However, a challenge lies in the lacking long-term thinking about how migration can contribute to development in origin countries, also on the part of migrant sending states involved in migration management (see also Hamada, 2012; Wickramasekara, 2015).

The protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan leads to remittance-spending being skewed toward covering the additional costs of electricity provision, due to the government's failure to provide necessary infrastructure to the people of Pakistan. Plans for saving and for investments in Pakistan were put off indefinitely. Thus, load shedding can be seen to obstruct potential investments by migrants in business or other material forms, or in terms of human investments, such as in education. Discarding investments in Pakistan were among the implications of the protracted electricity crisis that interviewees felt the most strongly about – aside from the direct consequences for the living conditions of their loved ones.

While the development effects of remittances in migrant-sending communities is debated from different perspectives – and at different scales – at the individual, family and household level, the fact that remittances as insurance mechanisms mitigate crisis is rarely disputed (Mazzucato, 2009). However, in a protracted crisis, remittances as mitigation mechanisms become the norm, which adversely affects other uses, which could support longer-term development goals. The deteriorating – rather than improving – structural conditions in Pakistan, in this case with specific reference to the electricity crisis and the lack of satisfactory measures taken to address this crisis at a national level, create a new dynamics of protracted mitigation through remittances. This works counter to efforts by migrants and remittance-receivers, to contribute to sustainable livelihoods, and livelihoods that need not depend on international remittances, or on international mobility, indefinitely.

Conclusion

Our comparative analysis of remittance-sending among Pakistani taxi-drivers in Barcelona and Oslo, underlines how length of stay, together with the location of close family, are key determinants of remittance-behavior, as largely might be expected (Carling, 2008; Grieco, 2004). However, in addition to these traditional remittance determinants, the protracted electricity crisis in Pakistan emerges as a salient factor shedding light on remittance-sending, in terms of amounts, recipients, and use. We find that the location of close family has a bearing on how research participants relate to the electricity crisis, but that with regard to other aspects, such as continued remittances and reflections on investments, the differences in terms of length of stay, and therefore also between Barcelona and Oslo, become less significant (see also Mahmoud, 2015).

Whilst the 'remittance decay' hypothesis, is tempered both by the location of migrants' close family, and their legal status, we also find that the context of the protracted electricity crisis brings to life the latent role of remittances as insurance mechanisms, in ways which run counter to the remittance decay hypothesis (see also Grieco, 2004; Le De et al., 2015; Mazzucato, 2009). This also serves to explain some of the ways in which remittance-sending from migrants' whose families are united with them in destination countries is sustained over time, albeit at lower proportional levels of their incomes, than amongst those who have their close families, particularly their households, in Pakistan.

We argue that there is no reason to doubt empirical qualitative evidence that migrants sending remittances are acutely conscious of the electricity crisis back home,

which has three main implications. First, the electricity crisis contributes to higher volumes of remittances, as senders contribute to cover higher electricity expenditures and higher costs of living. Second, the electricity crisis results in a decreasing proportion of remittance that can be spent for investment purposes of different kinds. In particular, investments, such as in businesses, are put off indefinitely due to the double disincentive of having to spend the money for other costs associated with the electricity crisis, and knowing that there is insufficient electricity supply to run many kinds of businesses adequately. Third, for some remittance-receivers, there is a need to readjust the spending pattern of remittances as a result of the electricity crisis. If more money is not coming in to the household, other costs have to be reduced correspondingly, which is the case when remittance-senders are not in a position to send more money. The negotiation and resolution of how remittances are spent in the context of the electricity crisis occurs between remittance-senders and receivers, and can effect investments in education, health as well as sustainable livelihoods (see also Erdal, 2012).

Discussions about the development effects of remittances at the individual and household level have in the past fallen prey to a sometimes normative portrayal of so-called 'productive' vs. 'consumption' oriented spending (Carling, 2008, 2014). Our analysis of remittance-sending to Pakistan, underlines how remittance-senders themselves stress that both the volumes and purposes for which remittances are being sent, are largely being shaped by structural conditions beyond their control. These are collectively experienced to be more urgent and fundamental, than the purposes remittances where planned to be spent on, most notably with regard to investments in sustainable livelihoods for migrants themselves and for their non-migrant households in Pakistan.

Our analysis of remittances in the context of the electricity crisis indicate the strong channeling of remittances toward costs associated with maintaining electricity despite the crisis – and mitigating effects – which suggests that remittance-reliance or even dependency may be seen to be upheld, or even increasing, as a consequence of the electricity crisis. The implication is an increased pressure for remittances – and a parallel pressure for continued migration, at an individual, family or household level – necessary to uphold current living standards.

Substantial remittance in-flows entail a potential for development contributions which can be realized (de Haas, 2012). In the Pakistani context, where there has been a stable increase in remittances in the past decade, it is noteworthy that this is paired both with a diaspora strategy for engagement with the diaspora, and with severe mismanagement on the part of the state, including contributing to, rather than resolving the protracted electricity crisis. Our findings contribute to the body of evidence supporting the argument that more needs to be done on the part of migrant sending state's with regard to development enhancing migration management (Hamada, 2012), or what Wickramasekara (2015) pointedly discusses in the context of South Asian migration to the Gulf – safety valve or development strategy? Remittances to Pakistan are increasing, but the state is not providing sufficient beneficial structures, which could realize the development potential of received migrant remittances, and the protracted electricity crisis and its lacking resolution is an exacerbating factor.

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Notes

1. Data from field notes.
2. The protracted electricity crisis is widely reported to be worsening, and is being connected to health risks during heat waves, including deaths (see e.g. reports in the New York Times and BBC).
3. All names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

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