From earthquake victims to citizens: Dependencies and precarious claims on the state in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan

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1

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Based on ethnographic research after the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan-controlled Azad Kashmir, this article uses 'disaster citizenship' as a conceptual lens focusing on how poor people renegotiated their relationships with the state. The promise of relief encouraged the poor to make new claims on the state as disaster victims and needy citizens deserving material assistance. I argue that given the social and political inequalities in the distribution of relief and reconstruction, people pursued a politics of citizenship that resisted both notions of liberal rights and neoliberal politics of self-responsibility and instead sought rightful material dependence on the state. This dependence, however, was ambivalent and precarious as people were often deprived of their material claims. Therefore, disaster citizenship remained closely intertwined with social dependencies, and people had to resort to favors, bribes, and submissive patron-client relationships to access state resources and counter their political neglect and limited democratic rights.

Introduction

The aftermath of a disaster is a time of hardship for people, often compounded by the struggle to be recognized as disaster victims and citizens deserving access to state and international relief and reconstruction programs. My study traces this struggle in the context of the 2005 earthquake in northeast Pakistan and Pakistan-controlled Azad Kashmir that killed more than 70,000 people and left over three million homeless. The political anthropology of disaster has widely shown that the recognition of disaster victims differs in society due to social and political inequalities across class, property, gender, and social identity lines, positioning people and their needs unequally in relation to the state and disaster government (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 2002). In Azad

2

Kashmir, the struggle against inequalities in the distribution of relief and reconstruction was further complicated by the region's unequal political relationship with Pakistan. The citizens of Azad Kashmir are governed by Pakistani politics and bureaucracy, but they lack formal political representation in Pakistan and the possibility to hold Pakistani state authorities in Azad Kashmir accountable. Pakistan's continuing territorial dispute with India over Jammu and Kashmir, a former state of colonial British India that included Azad Kashmir, has left the region's legal-political status unresolved and ambiguous. Despite having its own government, administration, and judiciary, Azad (Urdu for 'free') Kashmir is fundamentally a 'disputed territory' under Pakistani control (Snedden 2012).

However, given citizens' limited democratic rights and unequal access to relief and reconstruction programs, an everyday politics of 'earthquake citizenship' emerged in post-disaster Azad Kashmir to counter social injustices in the distribution of state resources (Holston 2008). This politics was based on a rather new sense of political belonging that intensified and spread among the poor and deprived, enabling them to claim a greater share in state resources on the ground that they were deserving and suffered from losses and everyday miseries (Das 2011). Through their claims, disaster victims and the poor in general reimagined and renegotiated their rights and relationship with the state. However, state authorities helped shape this new sense of citizenship. Unlike in the past, with the support of international donors and reconstruction partners, Pakistan emerged as a 'welfare state' that promised to reach all citizens affected by the earthquake.

Siddiqi (2019) points to similar processes of disaster citizenship in the aftermath of the 2010 and 2011 floods in Pakistan, where the state introduced a cash transfer program that transformed people's practices and notions of citizenship in Sindh. The program, linked to citizens' national identity cards, distributed ATM cards to all households in the flood affected

3

regions. Siddiqi takes the cash transfer as evidence that the Pakistani state reached out to its citizens in a new and fundamentally 'universal' and 'equal' way. While disaster relief has never been defined as a legal entitlement in Pakistani politics, Siddiqi argues that the universality of the program eventually enabled people in Sindh to imagine their relationship with the state as a political 'contract' and, subsequently, to claim material assistance in a more 'progressive' way—that is, as a citizenship right. This leads her to the conclusion that the practices of 'disaster citizenship' in Sindh were increasingly built on entitlements and rights rather than social relationships of caste, kinship, and patronage (2019,103–129).

In this article, I use disaster citizenship as a conceptual lens to focus on the political processes that take place in the aftermath of devastating events. These processes disrupt, restore, and transform the existing notions of political belonging and the relationships between states and citizens (Chhotray 2014). The concept understands the distribution of relief and reconstruction as situations in which people—perhaps more than ever before— experience and practice political belonging and citizenship rights. They translate their needs into political claims and aim at holding state authorities responsible (Eckert 2011,311). However, my conceptualization of 'earthquake citizenship' differs from Siddiqi's rather narrow liberal understanding of citizenship, as she distinguishes 'progressive' rights, based on a 'contract' between the citizen subject and the 'rational' bureaucratic and sovereign state, from 'traditional' social relationships. Beside the problematic dichotomy of modern/traditional, her concept maintains citizenship and rights as necessarily liberating and progressive practices, ignoring the ways 'rational' bureaucracy governs people and subjects them to disciplinary forms of power and corruption. For Siddiqi, citizenship is a desirable political relationship in which the state grants universal and equal rights to the citizens, replacing their undesirable social dependencies.

Conversely, drawing on the anthropology of citizenship (Das 2011; Eckert 2011; Holston 2008; Lazar 2013), I argue that people's relationship with the state is fundamentally a social relationship – one that is imagined and practiced in everyday life as a moral claim to rights in relation to state authorities. My conceptualization of 'earthquake citizenship' foregrounds people's lived experiences of rights and political belonging 'without assuming liberal parameters' (Lazar 2013,16). Liberal citizenship is only one possible constellation of ideas and practices that may constitute people's relationship with the state. Additionally, rather than presupposing citizenship to be a liberation from the social bonds of caste, kinship, and patron-client relationships, I understand the citizen-state relationship as an entangled 'process of self-making and being made' (Ong 1996,737) in that the state makes citizens and citizens make themselves and the state. Rather than a unitary entity, I conceptualize 'the state' as a process that is neither necessarily liberal nor empowering for citizens, but ambivalent, exposing them to diverse liberal, non-liberal, and neoliberal forms of political power. As I will show, the Pakistani welfare state in Azad Kashmir, which promised relief and reconstruction equally to all affected citizens, was deeply intertwined with neoliberal politics that induced scarcity, fostered corruption, and neglected the poor, using narratives of citizens' self-responsibility.

This study contributes to the critical and interdisciplinary literature on rights that foregrounds citizenship and claims-making as potentially self-empowering and transformative practices of politics (Golder 2015; Sokhi-Bulley 2016; Zivi 2012), showing how poor people understand and use rights to contest and remake the power relations that govern them. However, this literature also aptly points out that the claim to rights is 'dangerously' entrenched in liberal political thinking, which tends to reduce citizenship to a 'contract' between free and equal individuals and a sovereign state that grants citizens social security and protection from authoritarian rule through the democratic 'rule of law'. The danger is that

a liberal politics of rights cannot exceed the limited understanding of both political power as sovereignty and the subject as a free individual. Therefore, political liberalism is likely to ignore, and thus fail to counter, the forms of power that constitute political subjects and their 'freedom' through discipline and (neoliberal) government (Foucault 1991; Golder 2015,10–12). However, does a politics of rights necessarily need to be liberal? How can the claim to rights empower people in relation to the state beyond the contract-thinking of political liberalism? Drawing on Foucault's turn to rights in his late writings and activism, Golder (2015) and others (Sokhi-Bulley 2016; Zivi 2012) convincingly argue that a 'counter-conduct of rights' (Golder 2015,20–23) is possible—one that is critical of, and different from, a liberal politics of rights but 'draws tactically upon the resources, practices, and institutions of liberalism' (Golder 2015,20). In this study, I use my ethnographic material to trace such a counter-conduct of rights that is grounded in poor peoples' everyday life in post-earthquake Azad Kashmir, showing how their practices of citizenship imagined rights and state-citizen relationships otherwise (Golder 2015,153–154)—that is, beyond both liberalism and neoliberal politics (Ong 2006; Sokhi-Bulley 2016,4–10). Rather than freedom, equality, and protection granted by a contract, the poor in Azad Kashmir sought a relationship of reliable dependence on the state as a 'material benefactor' (Ferguson 2015,161). This is how they resisted and countered the structural violence of disaster bureaucracy and neoliberal politics that limited state assistance, fostered corruption, and eventually denied people more substantial material rights, claiming that they were 'self-responsible' citizens (Holston 2008). I emphasize that the ambivalence and tension between people's fears, hopes, disappointments, and expectations toward the state are not exceptional but crucial to the ways people imagined and practiced citizenship rights.

While citizenship in Azad Kashmir was imagined as reliable and rightful dependence on the state, it remained deeply entangled with social patron-client relationships. Often, only

political connections, bribes, and favors enabled people to access state relief and successfully claim what was rightfully theirs. This is how disaster citizenship in Azad Kashmir emerged as a non-liberal politics of material rights and rightful dependence on a patron-like state seeking to counter corruption and political neglect caused by neoliberal politics of self-responsibility.

Disaster citizenship as rightful material dependence on the state

Throughout this study, I draw on my ethnographic research in Azad Kashmir's capital, Muzaffarabad.[1] During three successive periods of fieldwork in a total of sixteen months between 2009 and 2012, I lived mostly among lower-class families on the outskirts of the town. In the neighborhood, where I rented a portion of a house from a local family, most families held small plots of land with their own homes, while poorer families lived on rent or disputed land. The socio-economic background of families in the neighborhood ranged from poor to middle class. The women mostly worked at home, while their husbands were—often precariously—employed in low- or middle-ranking positions in the state's administration. Others ran small businesses like grocery stores or worked as rickshaw drivers or day laborers in construction. Like in Azad Kashmir more generally, the people I worked with were predominantly Sunni Muslims, and women observed *pardah*—the separation from unrelated men through their absence from, and/or veiling in, public spaces. They belonged to diverse kinship groups (*birāderī*) or castes constituting women and men's most reliable and obligatory relationships of care and mutual support in everyday life. The social belonging to a *birāderī* often cross-cut class and socio-economic positions and are used to access state and other material resources and build patron-client relationships with wealthy and more powerful relatives (Lyon 2004; Martin 2016).

I soon became a part of local networks of neighbors and relatives in Muzaffarabad and surrounding villages. Using participant observation and informal as well as structured

7

interviews, my research focused on the politics of reconstruction and aimed to understand how earthquake survivors experienced and interacted with state authorities and bureaucracy (Schild 2019). I spent time with families in their homes and participated in their everyday lives as much as possible. Thereby, I encountered people's histories and memories of the devastating earthquake and its aftermath, and witnessed their everyday struggles to rebuild homes and lives—struggles for access to material assistance, which involved finding out about relief programs, visiting officials, requesting help from state officials, intermediaries, and patrons. In many ways, access to state assistance was not transparent to people (and me) and often surrounded by speculations and rumors. Beside my interaction with local families, I studied official documents and newspaper archives, visited offices, and spoke to state officials about past and current reconstruction programs, distribution procedures, and formal entitlements. I aimed to better understand this non-transparency of the state und to contextualize and relate my interlocutors' life histories and struggles to the broader local and translocal processes of political power and disaster government. Therefore, I draw on ethnographic research both 'outside' and 'within' local state bureaucracy and Pakistan's relief and reconstruction programs.

In October 2006—one year after the earthquake—state officials announced the distribution of prefabricated shelter houses in Muzaffarabad, claiming that all families whose houses had been destroyed by the earthquake would receive such a temporary house. I was not in Muzaffarabad at that time. However, the people recalled the state's announcement of 'shelters for all' as an unfulfilled promise in their interactions with me, neighbors, relatives, and state officials. These 'prefabs'—made of high-quality corrugated iron—were intended to serve homeless families as temporary houses while the rebuilding of their permanent homes was plagued with restrictions due to extensive urban development projects that would make Muzaffarabad more earthquake-safe. Moreover, the prefabs were also given to families who

lacked the financial resources to rebuild their permanent homes. Despite the state's promise of 'shelters for all', many families who had lost their homes in the earthquake were eventually ignored in the distribution process, and were bitterly disappointed and angry about it.

Bilal, his wife Madia and their two daughters lived in a self-made shelter house constructed of brick walls, wooden pillars and beans, and corrugated iron sheets. Bilal, a low-ranking state employee, built the temporary house after the family lost their home in the earthquake. When I first met him, he lacked the money to rebuild a permanent, 'good home' (*acchā ghar*)—a larger house with reinforced concrete pillars and beams, and a flat concrete roof (*lintel*). Bilal had not received a prefab from the state authorities. However, his parents, brothers, and sisters who lived nearby with their families had received their temporary shelters. They had also rebuilt their houses damaged by the earthquake. Badar, one of Bilal's older brothers, lived with his wife and children in a *lintel* house while renting the prefab to another family to earn an additional income. Sadia and Iram, Bilal's older sisters, used their shelter as additional rooms in their homes so that their families could spend the nights safe from earthquakes. Bilal's parents had a large *lintel* house where his younger brothers and unmarried sisters also lived. They used the prefab as additional storage rooms. But they could also easily turn it into a shelter against earthquakes or a separate home, probably for a future daughter-in-law.

Against this backdrop, Bilal and Madia often complained about the injustice that, unlike their wealthier relatives, they only had a small temporary self-made house to live in. Why was Bilal, the poor (*ğarīb*) among his relatives, as he claimed, left out when the shelters were distributed?

Bilal told me about officials from the Development Authority, Muzaffarabad, who visited families in the area to survey and clarify the entitlement to the shelters had put Bilal's name, along with those of his parents and siblings, on the distribution list. The compensation

money that the reconstruction authorities paid him for his destroyed house served as credible proof that the family had lost their home in the earthquake. Therefore, they were formally entitled to a prefab. However, the family never received 'their' shelter.

Bilal and Madia claimed the prefab as a 'right', however, less in a legal than moral sense—given the state's promise and their neediness, due to the absence of a proper home, and relative poverty compared to the wealth of their relatives who had received a shelter. A certain mistrust and envy toward their local *birāderī* was palpable. However, Bilal and Madia's anger was mainly directed against the state. Like many other people I worked with, they often lamented that the shelters and disaster relief more generally did not reach the poor and/or most deserving. They blamed corruption and considered politicians and state authorities thieves (*cor*) who deprived people of their rights. Bilal recalled that immediately after his relatives received their shelters, corrupt practices began disrupting the distribution process. Officials stopped allocating the houses according to the lists prepared earlier; instead, they began receiving bribes (*rišwat*) and extending favors (*sifāriš*) to friends and relatives or other people with political connections.

Bilal and Madia's claim points us to a notion of right that was grounded in people's neediness and suffering as homeless earthquake victims and the resulting belief that they deserved material assistance from the state. This belief was constructed and maintained through everyday accusations of corruption that enabled people to pursue and continue a rightful struggle for survival and rebuilding lives and homes.

Gupta (2012) shows for India that accusations of corruption are closely linked to ideas of citizenship. They are based on certain assumptions about the state's relationship with people and aim to hold governments and state authorities accountable for how they respond to citizens and their needs. In this way, accusations of corruption 'act [...] to represent the rights of citizens to themselves' (Gupta 2012,99). By accusing state officials of corruption in the

distribution of 'shelters for all', Bilal and Madia aimed at reclaiming the position of deserving citizens who have a right to material assistance. This claim to rights countered forms of marginalization, non-transparency and corruption while appealing to the state as an accountable and incorruptible 'material benefactor' (Ferguson 2015,161) of *all* citizens.

While accusing state officials of corruption, most families I interacted with were also aware of the ambivalence and tension of their own need to resort to corrupt practices such as bribery and *sifāriš* to access the material resources provided by the state. They justified the connections they used and the bribes they paid by claiming that they would otherwise have been denied their right to material assistance. This ambivalence and tension evident in corruption and fears of being neglected and ignored were not exceptional to, but constitutive of, the way people imagined and experienced the state, and themselves as citizens in relation to that state.

Some people sought *sifāriš* through intermediaries like me, local politicians, and relatives who had connections to the bureaucracy. In my case, they hoped that given my ongoing visits to reconstruction authorities and my acquaintance with Mazhar Iqbal, a local politician recently reappointed as the chairman of the Development Authority, I might have the connections to obtain a prefab and/or other relief and material benefits for them. After Mazhar Iqbal resumed some urban development projects in Muzaffarabad, speculations and rumors erupted in the neighborhood that the Development Authority was going to distribute new prefabs. The 'news' about the prefabs surprised me because the temporary shelter program had officially been closed for over a year. However, within a few weeks, I was approached several times with requests for help, including from Bilal and Madia. This is how I encountered everyday politics of citizenship using intermediaries like me and/or other potential patrons to achieve a relationship of reliable and rightful material dependence on a patron-like state.

11

One of the requests for help came from Hassan, the poor cousin of my neighbor Faiza and her brother Amjad who was a servant in Mazhar Iqbal's office. On a visit with Faiza to her brother's home, Amjad introduced me to Hassan who had suddenly turned up and began informing me of his misery. Hassan lived with his wife and four children on disputed land in a simple self-made shelter house, made of wood and corrugated iron sheets, and a tent. He had not received a prefab, as he could not pay bribes, he explained. Further, Hassan did not hold a proper land title. Therefore, state officials most likely did not consider his entitlement to a prefab. Using his cousin's acquaintance with me for *sifāriš* and to make a favorable political connection with the otherwise reluctant bureaucracy, Hassan asked me to talk to Mazhar Iqbal to help him obtain a prefab from the Development Authority. I replied that I would certainly forward his request to Mazhar Iqbal but had little hope since the temporary shelter program had long been closed. Amjad, however, disagreed and assured me and Hassan that new prefabs would arrive at the Development Authority soon.

Like Bilal and Madia, Hassan pointed out a right to state relief he was denied. However, he claimed this right less as a homeless earthquake victim than a poor and deserving citizen. His claim to material assistance was grounded in his poverty, disputed land ownership, and everyday struggle for survival. Through our interaction, I learned that Hassan, a precarious day laborer, was dependent on state assistance, and that he imagined this dependence on the state as rightful and desirable rather than wrong and dishonorable. I remember, however, how uncomfortable and embarrassed I felt with his submissiveness and practice of dependence toward me. I was not only sorry for him, but ashamed of my privilege and power and thus deeply felt morally obliged to help him. It was only later that I realized that Hassan was addressing me as a quasi-representative and intermediary of the state. He confronted me with a politics of rights and citizenship that was intended to create an intimate and reliable relationship of dependence—one that is based on a strong sense of moral

responsibility among the powerful toward their poor dependents and urges them to act as patron-like benefactors. My encounter with Hassan suggests that claiming rights can be a powerful, perlocutionary act that creates the world it represents by 'constraining the actions […] of other individuals and institutions' (Zivi 2012,12).

Sometimes, people also directly confronted state officials with this politics of citizenship. When I visited Mazhar Iqbal several days later to ask him about the prefabs, he contradicted Amjad, vehemently denying that the Development Authority would distribute new shelters. He admitted, however, that the speculations and rumors were widespread and persistent and told me of people who visited the Development Authority to inquire about the prefabs. One day, a poor woman had come to his office and asked for one of the new shelters. Mazhar Iqbal recalled that when he asked her where her husband was, she avoided his question. He told her that the Development Authority no longer had prefabs to distribute, but she refused to believe him and claimed that she knew additional shelters had been delivered to the Development Authority. In recounting this and similar encounters, Mazhar Iqbal conveyed a sense of pity and responsibility for the poor but also amusement, displeasure, and arrogance toward the female visitor. For him, this unaccompanied and stubborn woman was disregarding the dominant social order of *pardah* through her improper presence in the public and male space of the state and by distrusting official information. However, Mazhar Iqbal claimed that he wanted to help her and all the other neglected, poor families. After his return to the Development Authority, he tried to resume the distribution of prefabs. He wrote several letters to the Saudi Arabian donors requesting additional shelters for Muzaffarabad. However, his request was eventually rejected.

Like the woman who had visited Mazhar Iqbal's office, many people distrusted the information from the Development Authority and its chairman. Even employees of the Development Authority, such as Amjad, confirmed the 'false' news about the shelters, which

they believed more likely to be 'true' than the official information. They feared that the political elite would ignore the poor and less powerful groups of society, as in the past. They were worried that the more powerful would keep the shelters for themselves and their relatives and friends. To prevent their neglect and defend what they considered their rightful claim against untrustworthy and corrupt state officials, they held on to the rumors and speculations and shared with neighbors and relatives the information that they deemed—considering their past experiences—more reliable. Given their well-founded fear of neglect, the rumors enabled people to continue their struggle for material assistance from the state by pursuing a politics of citizenship and rights that put pressure on state officials and politicians like Mazhar Iqbal, holding them responsible for their promises and the needs of their dependents.

Siddiqi's (2019) ethnographic material points to practices of disaster citizenship in Sindh that were comparable to the politics of rightful material dependence on the state in Muzaffarabad. In both disasters, people increasingly turned to the state for material assistance, which, at the same time, they began to understand and claim as their 'right'. These claims that constituted disaster citizenship in Sindh and Azad Kashmir were limited to *material* entitlements. Like my research in Azad Kashmir, Siddiqi's study in Sindh suggests that people wanted money, shelter, and other material benefits (from the state), rather than individual freedom, political equality, and protection from authoritarian rule through a 'contract'. People imagined the state as a material benefactor and practiced citizenship as both political entitlement and a submissive relationship of dependence.

Like Hassan, who had to resort to *sifārish* to enforce his right to material assistance from the state, poor citizens in Sindh relied on intermediaries to 'access what was rightfully theirs' (Siddiqi 2019,113). This shows that, contrary to Siddiqi's idealized image, the state in Sindh was not universal and equal in reaching out to citizens. As I discuss below, the liberal

welfare state points to a particular (self-)image of the state among other (neoliberal) narratives of social assistance, constructed by international donors, state authorities, and citizens in the aftermath of disaster. Similar to Azad Kashmir, corruption and inequalities were evident in the distribution of relief in Sindh, with the poor having more difficulty overcoming bureaucratic hurdles and forms of neglect than wealthier citizens with political connections. For Siddiqi, however, these processes were mere exceptions to the rights-based disaster citizenship in Sindh. Here, my research suggests otherwise: to understand corruption and the unequal distribution of relief as fundamental to the way the poor and deprived imagined and practiced citizenship and claimed material assistance from the state. I believe, people like Hassan depended on patron-client relationships with more powerful relatives and intermediaries (like me) to access state relief, and related themselves to the state and its (quasi-) representatives (like me) through practices of dependence. Thereby, they used social relationships to access state resources, and imagine and construct a more intimate and reliable relationship with the state. In their struggle for survival and rebuilding lives and homes, the poor sought a position of rightful dependence on the state as a patron, rather than one of free and equal citizens, to counter forms of political neglect and marginalization.

Reconstruction and the self-responsible citizen

The neglect and corruption evident in the distribution of temporary shelters in Muzaffarabad was crucially linked to neoliberal politics and the related underfunding of the state's program for rebuilding permanent homes in the town.

With the support of foreign donors and international organizations like the UN, General Pervez Musharraf, the then president of Pakistan, set up the Pakistani Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) to manage the earthquake-resistant rebuilding of villages and cities in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. In Muzaffarabad, the

Pakistani Reconstruction Authority, in consultation with engineers from Japan, prepared a master plan to rebuild the city. Evaluating potential earthquake and landslide hazards in Muzaffarabad, the Japanese engineers recommended building restrictions for places evaluated as hazardous and unsuitable for settlement and further development of places considered safe and suitable. They listed more than a hundred reconstruction and urban development projects that focused on the construction of roads, bridges, public buildings, parks, and the building of satellite towns where people living in hazardous areas would be resettled.

I have shown elsewhere (Schild 2015) how delays in the planning and implementation of the master plan brought severe criticism and protest by local politicians, civil society activists, and journalists in Muzaffarabad against the ERRA and the Pakistani government.[2] Additionally, as briefly mentioned above, the master plan complicated the rebuilding of permanent homes in the city. In the villages, where political interventions focused on the rapid rebuilding of houses, ERRA started to implement an owner-driven housing reconstruction program as early as 2006. In Muzaffarabad, however, I learned from people, policy documents, and conversations with officials that reconstruction focused on public infrastructure projects. Since the master plan was implemented slowly, ERRA restricted the rebuilding of permanent houses to prevent newly reconstructed homes from obstructing the implementation of urban development projects. The rebuilding of permanent homes in Muzaffarabad was banned for several years, and only temporary structures, like prefabs or the self-made shelter houses Bilal and Hassan had built, were allowed. Moreover, the Pakistani Reconstruction Authority refused to implement the combined compensation and housing reconstruction program it had operated in the villages.

Provided that their houses were rebuilt according to earthquake-resistant construction guidelines, ERRA compensated the owners of destroyed houses in the villages with 150,000 rupees each.[3] In Muzaffarabad, however, the Pakistani Reconstruction Authority compensated

families for their destroyed houses without any inspection or approval from technical experts of the construction works—with unconditional cash grants. According to the Pakistani Reconstruction Authority, the 'owner-driven, assisted and inspected housing reconstruction regime' (ERRA 2010,22) that had been used in the villages was inoperable in the cities. In an urban development strategy document, ERRA stated that the

> financial compensation mechanism used for rural housing reconstruction is neither applicable nor practicable for urban housing reconstruction. Rs 175,000 [sic!][4] […] constitutes a minor percentage of [the urban dweller's] total cost of reconstruction. Therefore, this amount is not the driving force behind reconstruction of urban houses (ERRA 2007,31).

I never discovered what else the Pakistani Reconstruction Authority believed should have enabled families to rebuild their homes apart from sufficient financial assistance. The cash grant each house owner in Muzaffarabad received for their destroyed house was far less than what was needed to rebuild a good and safe home.[5] This scarcity is evident from the situation of people like Bilal and Madia. However, ERRA countered the criticism of families' lack of financial assistance with a narrative of self-responsibility. The director of ERRA's housing reconstruction program in Azad Kashmir, Irshad Hamdani, maintained in our conversation in late 2009 that the 'compensation' in Muzaffarabad was

> just a subsidy. These [payments; AN] are tokens not compensations to provide you [with] assistance, to emotionally prepare you for the construction of your own house. I think no one can construct a house of four hundred square feet with 175,000 rupees. As we consider and deal with it, we say that this is a subsidy for you, and you have to construct your house because the house is a construction for yourself, not for me or anyone else.

Given this lack of financial assistance, the Pakistani Reconstruction Authority eventually promoted the building and distribution of temporary constructions and agreed with the governments of Sweden and Saudi Arabia to sponsor the above-mentioned temporary

17

prefab shelter program for Muzaffarabad. The distribution of the prefabs was thus closely linked with the state and international underfunding of the program for rebuilding permanent houses in Muzaffarabad. Therefore, the welfare state's promise of 'shelters for all' was not inconsistent with the neoliberal politics of 'owner-driven' rebuilding of homes but rather constitutive of this politics of self-responsibility, enabling ERRA to justify and hold on to a widely failed housing reconstruction program that neglected the poor.

Irshad Hamdani and other ERRA officials admitted that the master plan and financial difficulties complicated the rebuilding of permanent houses in Muzaffarabad. However, they equally asserted that families could eventually rebuild their homes and use the prefabs as temporary shelters until they moved to the satellite towns and/or saved enough money to rebuild. The narrative of owner-driven housing reconstruction was used to transfer responsibility to 'self-reliable' citizens, most of whom were, however, not in a position to rebuild permanent homes. Furthermore, the distribution of temporary shelters, which should have alleviated their miseries somewhat, did not go according to the plans, as the situations of many people, like Bilal and Madia confirm. ERRA announced that about 6,700 shelters (the official number of houses that had collapsed in the earthquake) should have been distributed among families in Muzaffarabad. In the end, as official numbers from local authorities confirm, only 4,200 families received a prefab house.

According to Mazhar Iqbal, the reappointed chairman of the Development Authority, this disparity was due to corruption and, subsequently, the refusal of the Saudi Arabian donor to deliver pre-agreed additional prefabs. The Development Authority visited the families in Muzaffarabad, compiled the lists of beneficiaries, and informed those entitled to a prefab that the shelters would be distributed to them soon. However, the distribution was disrupted before all the families received their promised shelter. Mazhar Iqbal told me that he had allocated the prefabs predominantly to families suffering from miserable housing conditions and thus

deserving of a temporary house. He stated that after the government of Azad Kashmir dismissed him as a chairman due to his opposition to ERRA, some officers in the Development Authority changed the remaining names on the lists of beneficiaries. After his dismissal, the shelters no longer reached the poor. Here, he agreed with Bilal and Madia and many other people in Muzaffarabad. Mazhar Iqbal believed that the Saudi Arabian donors terminated the delivery of the shelters because a local politician and member of the Legislative Assembly of Azad Kashmir had interfered in the distribution, prioritizing the western part of the city where many of his voters lived.

The Pakistani state and ERRA completely ignored these local grievances. They transferred responsibility for the distribution of the prefabs to the Development Authority. Additionally, the distribution of prefabs and housing cash grants for 'self-responsible' homeowners led ERRA officials like Hamdani to claim that housing in Muzaffarabad was no longer an 'issue'. They ignored the years of hardships and families' struggles to rebuild their homes and lives post-earthquake. However, along with the neoliberal striving and underfunding of housing reconstruction to make self-responsible citizens, the Pakistani state and international donors not only created a situation of scarcity that fostered corruption but also displayed an unprecedented 'generosity' and 'universality' toward the people of Azad Kashmir by distributing and/or promising cash grants and 'shelters for all'. This (self-)image of the welfare state—the state as a material benefactor for all deserving citizens—was mostly a promise that remained unfilled. Nonetheless, it eventually led to an everyday politics of rights and citizenship, encouraging the poor and deprived to hold state officials accountable for their promises and claim material rights and thus more substantial forms of political belonging.

Dependencies and the possibilities and limits of claiming rights otherwise

As discussed above, disaster citizenship in Azad Kashmir was closely entangled with notions and practices of reliable and rightful material dependence on the state. However, this politics of citizenship involved both social relationships of dependence on intermediaries or patrons such as relatives and friends to access state resources and practices of seeking dependence on a patron-like state.

In his research on cash transfer programs in southern Africa, Ferguson (2015) points out how the entitlement to state assistance brings about change in state-society relationships and notions of citizenship. Against the background of decreasing income opportunities for poor people, he understands political programs that distributed cash and other material benefits as forming part of citizens' rightful dependence on the state. 'To be dependent on someone', Ferguson argues, 'is to be able to make at least some limited claims on that person' (Ferguson 2015,153). In contrast to the notion of free and equal rights-bearing subjects before the sovereign and rational bureaucratic state in liberal political thinking, Ferguson understands dependence as a precondition of social life in general. He prompts us to think of the diverse hierarchical and unequal social relationships in everyday life—like those between children and parents or, in social communities, between poor and wealthy relatives or friends––as interdependencies, which build on notions of sharing, care, and mutual support, rather than freedom and equality. Based on ethnographic findings and political concerns about reducing poverty amid widespread unemployment in southern Africa, he maintains that material assistance and cash grants invented a new politics of distribution. This politics rested on citizenship as dependence and the resulting entitlement of the poor and deprived to a 'rightful share' (Ferguson 2015,24) in the state's wealth.

> Citizenship has often been imagined as a domain of equality and rights [...] But where
> social assistance looms so large in the state-citizen relationship, the state may well appear

to the citizen not principally as protector of equal rights, but as a material benefactor or even patron, while the positive content of citizenship itself may increasingly come to rest precisely on being a rightful and deserving dependent of the state (Ferguson 2015,161–162).

During loss, widespread social suffering, and increased need for shelter and financial assistance, like after a disaster, citizenship also turns into an issue of dependence on the state as a material benefactor. In Muzaffarabad, the struggle for rebuilding homes and lives, as my research suggests, linked citizenship to practices and notions of rightful dependence on a patron-like state. Rather than ideas of equality or freedom, these notions of dependence enabled people like Hassan and Bilal to claim what they were promised and a moral right to material assistance from the state—given their neediness as earthquake victims and/or poor and deserving citizens. Thereby, they resisted the neoliberal narrative of the self-responsible homeowner-citizen that Pakistan's internationally supported housing reconstruction program used to justify the political neglect of the poor.

Similarly, out of the failures of development in India, a politics of citizenship emerged that, by seeking material entitlements, countered neoliberal notions of citizens as self-responsible individual entrepreneurs (Sharma 2008,143). With material claims on the Indian state, poor citizens responded to socio-economic inequalities, corruption, and, due to the rise of neoliberal governing practices, the transformation of welfare-oriented development—under state authorities' responsibility—into empowerment-based self-development for which individuals and communities are held responsible (Sharma 2008,121–149). Such claims clearly diverge from the politics and expectations of neoliberal citizenship. The 'neoliberal subject is […] not a citizen with claims on the state but a self-enterprising citizen-subject' (Ong 2006,14). Like the self-responsible citizen

mentioned by the official Irshad Hamdani above, the neoliberal subject is an 'active individual who has no need of […] rights' (Sokhi-Bulley 2016,91) but can take care of themself.

Sokhi-Bulley points out in her work on neoliberal community building in the UK that the politics of self-responsibility suppresses 'resistance and the right of the rights-bearing citizen to ethically resist' (Sokhi-Bulley 2016,108) the forms of power that govern them. At the same time, she is critical of a liberal politics of rights that is likely to fail at countering forms of power that constitute citizens and their 'freedom' through discipline and government rather than sovereignty and the rule of law (Foucault 1991; Golder 2015). Against this backdrop, Sokhi-Bulley turns to the 'rioting subject' in the 2011 London riots, tracing a 'counter-conduct of rights' (Golder 2015,20) in that the rioters resisted by acting *otherwise*—that is, contrary to the expectations of liberal and neoliberal citizenship (Sokhi-Bulley 2016,116–139). My argument regarding the 'dependent subject' in post-disaster Azad Kashmir is similar. Being neither equal citizens, nor self-responsible citizens, who take care of themselves, the poor in Azad Kashmir resisted their political neglect and marginalization by using inequalities to claim a right to be dependent on the state and other powerful patrons in society for their survival. However, such non-liberal resistance to liberal and neoliberal politics comes not without danger either.

As I stated above, citizenship was fraught with tensions between people's expectations and actual experiences of the state. Several poor and needy families like those of Bilal and Hassan were neglected by the temporary shelter program. They found that their rights and positions as deserving citizens, namely as dependents of the state, were easily revokable and had to be continuously defended against, and with, state officials (or intermediaries) and related practices of bribery and *sifāriš*. Along with the

positive content of rightful dependence mentioned by Ferguson (2015,162), there was an obvious negative content of earthquake citizenship. The dependence on the state as a material benefactor exposed citizens to forms of disciplinary power such as bureaucratic violence evident in corruption, submissive relationships and humiliating encounters with officials, intermediaries and/or patrons. Like the woman who visited Mazhar Iqbal in his office, poorer people and women often had to endure disrespectful treatment and comments by officials who question their presence and right to ask for help and transparency, and keep them waiting for hours.

The state's disaster government in Azad Kashmir maintained forms of inequalities by bringing material benefits to wealthy citizens with political connections rather than the poor. The unfulfilled promise of relief and material assistance also bound the poor more tightly to disciplinary forms of bureaucratic state power (Das 2004). The political aftermath of the 2001 earthquake in the city of Bhuj, Gujarat, revealed a similar tension resulting from the enlarged disaster state (Simpson 2013, 2005). While people were angry with the state and worried about their futures, compensation programs promised important material resources to respond to pressing needs.

The fears of neglect linked with the distribution of relief in Muzaffarabad created mistrust and anger toward the state, circulating in the form of accusations of corruption, but also envy and rivalry for material assistance within society (Sökefeld 2020), such as between Bilal and his relatives. The promise of material assistance exposed people like Hassan and Bilal to bureaucratic and disciplinary forms of state power, stained their relationships with others and kept them waiting and occupied with asserting their rights. They were forced to make considerable efforts to be recognized as rightful dependents on the state. They had to visit offices and find intermediaries (like me) and more powerful people who helped them access the state's resources. This is how, the distribution and

23

promise of relief may not only turn disaster victims into citizens who make claims on the state but can also drive people apart, dissolve protests, and prevent more collective forms of resistance against political and economic inequalities when 'the struggle for compensation [becomes] a collective preoccupation pursued along non-collective lines' (Simpson 2005,238).

However, in Muzaffarabad, the politics of citizenship and rightful material dependence on the state, as my research suggests, was also a collective achievement and involved social practices like accusations of corruption and rumors that the state was going to distribute new prefabs, which circulated among neighbors, relatives, and friends. Through these accusations and rumors, people not only kept the state's promise of 'shelters for all' alive in everyday interactions and relationships, but also asserted their moral right to material assistance from the state. They enforced this right either by obtaining help from intermediaries such as relatives and friends and/or by visiting the responsible authorities directly like the woman in Mazhar Iqbal's office did. Contrary to the Pakistani state and ERRA officials like Hamdani who considered the housing cash grants and prefabs merely a 'subsidy' for homeless earthquake victims, people imagined the state's assistance less as a special treatment right than a fundamental moral right— that is, a right to (material) rights of poor citizens (Eckert 2011,313). The claims of people like Hassan on the state did not arise only from their position as suffering earthquake victims, but rather point to how these claims increasingly came to rest on the more general belief that the poor had a right to depend on the state for material assistance because they were poor and needed and deserved such a relationship with the state for survival.

Through accusations of corruption, the politics of citizenship in Muzaffarabad also constructed and maintained an alternative and idealized image of the state and

citizens' dependence on the state (see Sharma 2008,148): the image of a redistributive state, providing material 'rights that can be accessed by even the poorest citizens without the obstacles of bureaucracy or the potential corruption and abuse of a patronage-based system of distribution' (Ferguson 2015,158). Like all politics of rights and citizenship, the dependence on the state involves aspirations to equality (Eckert 2011,31). Here, it is in the sense of a rightful share in state resources that belongs to *all* people belonging to the state. However, unless the neoliberal politics of underfunding state assistance stops creating a situation of scarcity that neglects the poor and fosters corruption and potentially abusive patron-client relationships (see Martin 2016), dependence on the state remains a precarious claim and struggle of the poor to achieve distributive justice and a rightful share in the state's wealth.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of the earthquake, by distributing and promising relief and material assistance to survivors, the state entered the lives of people in Azad Kashmir in a new and unprecedented way. Using this promise and the new image of the state as a material benefactor, earthquake victims and the poor more generally turned themselves into deserving citizens. They claimed their rights to material assistance from the state, through everyday practices such as rumors, accusations of corruption, requests for help and favors, bribes, and submissive relationships with state officials and intermediaries such as more powerful relatives and friends. I argued that this everyday politics of citizenship involved a counter-conduct of liberal rights and neoliberal citizenship in the way the poor imagined citizenship as rightful material dependence on the state, struggling against political neglect, corruption, and state politics of self-responsibility to rebuild their homes and lives after the earthquake.

25

Rather than assuming a liberal understanding of citizenship in the first place—one that equates citizenship with equality, rational bureaucracy, and the liberation of society from kinship, caste, and patron-client relationships—I suggested taking an anthropological stance toward citizenship that builds on the everyday experiences, practices, and relationships of non-elite people and examines citizenship as a practice of claims-making. For the poor, citizenship is often not only a claim, as current anthropological theory maintains (Das 2011; Eckert 2011; Ferguson 2015; Lazar 2013), but a *precarious* claim to dependence on the state in a situation of scarcity and political neglect. In Azad Kashmir, this claim created, and rested on, entangled social and political dependencies and related notions and practices of patronage and entitlements.

Against this backdrop, it is misleading to praise the state's distribution of relief after disasters and the resulting spread of elements of formal and liberal citizenship, such as entitlements linked to citizens' identity cards and land titles, as an achievement of disaster citizenship. Rather, we need to reach a more nuanced and critical understanding of how, in society, the state makes and neglects citizens, and how citizens make claims on the state, using and countering social and political inequalities in their struggle for survival. Like citizenship and rights claims in general (Golder 2015; Sokhi-Bulley 2016), the struggle for rightful dependence on a patron-like state not only empowers people but also exposes them to social and political forms of power evident in bureaucratic practices, corruption, submissive and abusive relationships of patronage. However, in Azad Kashmir, and other regions of South Asia and beyond, where the poor have limited access to state resources and legal-political rights to hold the state accountable, the politics of citizenship as rightful dependence on the state responds to poverty and the precariousness of life, democracy and liberal citizenship that is worsened by neoliberal politics assuming 'self-responsible' citizens care for themselves. In a situation of scarcity

and political neglect, dependence on the state enables the poor to build their material claims less on a 'contract' than on an everyday social and intimate relationship with the state, in that the more powerful cannot so easily avoid their responsibility to care for those who depend on them for survival.

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Endnote
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[1] Muzaffarabad, a city with 100,000 inhabitants, was severely affected by the disaster. Government buildings, schools, the regional hospital, roads, and more than 15,000 houses collapsed, causing several thousand deaths and injuries.

[2] The Pakistani control of Azad Kashmir has been confirmed and, in some ways, expanded since the earthquake, linking previous and more authoritarian forms of domination with politics of state welfare, urban development, and neo-liberal empowerment.

[3] The compensations were distributed in three instalments: 75,000 rupees for the construction of the foundation; 25,000 for the walls; 50,000 for the roof.

[4] Critics of ERRA point out that families received an initial cash grant of 25,000 rupees to cover basic needs that must be distinguished from the housing cash grants.

[5] My interlocutors estimated the cost for the construction of such a house to be at least 400,000 rupees.