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Collective Action, Clientelism and Connectivity

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Abstract: *Backed by a range of studies finding only limited propensity for free-riding when communities have an interest in self provision, the last few decades have seen a surge of interest in community based development amongst international organisations. A major caveat to the 'second wave' of collective action studies, however, is that collective action will often break down under hierarchical social relationships. This is unfortunate news for rural societies in developing countries, as these are often entrenched in patron-client networks. And while studies of collective action under clientelism are in short supply, the few that exist are generally pessimistic. This paper argues, however, that clientelist relations are highly context-specific, which matters a great deal for their implications for collective action. Making use of a natural experiment in rural Punjab, Pakistan, the paper finds that the unequal relationship between landlords and peasants does not, in and by itself, block peasant collective action. Rather, it is the interaction between clientelism and isolation that allow patrons to block community based projects. Despite still relying on powerful landlords, peasants in connected villages face no such constraints. On the contrary, their patrons assisted them in their collective endeavours, making the hierarchical network an added resource for peasants to rely upon.*

Key words: *Collective action, Clientelism, Interlinked markets, Rural road networks, Pakistan*

JEL classification: *O18, Z13*

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In recent years, considerable emphasis has been placed on community based development as a way of improving the wellbeing of the poor. The World Bank alone has more than doubled its spending on such projects over the last ten years (Mansuri and Rao 2004). In the presence of state failure, community based projects can be an alternative avenue for citizens to provide the goods and services needed to improve their well-being (Hirshman 1984, Abers 1998, Dongier et al. 2002, Tripp 1992, Di Gregorio et al. 2008). The emphasis on community based projects is not only due to the direct benefit that such projects have of providing citizens with public goods, but also due to the perceived indirect benefit of building trust and cooperation so as to facilitate future community based activities (Hadenius and Uggla 1996, Fox 1994). And while Mancur Olson (1971) would have argued that the collective action problem would restrict the success of community based activities, empirical and experimental research has shown us otherwise (see for example Wade 1988, Ostrom 2000, Camerer 2003, Frey 1994 Krishna 2002, Baker 2005, Hadenius and Uggla 1996, Bratton 1994, Shue 1994, Meinzen-Dick et al. 2002). Collective action theories, over the last few decades, have come to acknowledge that individuals' preferences are not homogenous, rather they vary depending on the society the individual resides in as preferences are shaped by societal interactions (see for example Ostrom 2005, 2000, Ostrom and Ahn 2009, Camerer 2003, Blomquist 1992, Granovetter1992).

Thus, a major contribution of the literature, post-Olson, is to highlight that the type of society individuals reside in has an impact, not only on their ability to engage in collective action, but also on the type of projects they can undertake. While societies with strong horizontal ties should be able to tackle fairly complex and varied projects, those undertaken by fragmented societies would be relatively limited in their scope. However, an implicit assumption in most collective action studies is that social interaction is between individuals of relatively equal status and power, but this is, of course, not always the case, and particularly not so in rural societies. The literature on rural development has extensively documented the existence of patron-client networks, characterised as relationships of dependence and inequality, with the resource rich having considerable control

over the activities of their peasant clients (Scott 1972, Powell 1970, Bardhan 1984, Pitt-Rivers 1954, Auyero et al. 2009, Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984, Basu 1986). Putnam (1993) in his study of Italy argued that collective action within such hierarchical networks would be fairly limited due to the asymmetric distribution of power. Furthermore, and more importantly for this paper, the presence of this hierarchical network is also argued to have a detrimental impact on peasants' ability to engage in collective action within their horizontal networks, both indirectly, by making peasants compete against one another for the patrons' resources (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984, Putnam 1993) and directly, by the patron investing in ways to minimize horizontal linkages, out of fear that peasant based collaboration may lower their dependence on him and enable them to collectively bargain for better terms of exchange (Popkin 1979).

However, contrary to this pessimistic view of clientelist networks, this paper will argue that patrons' ability to influence their clients' horizontal relationships is highly dependent on the environment in which the hierarchical network exists. In areas which are relatively isolated, and where there is high inequality, peasants would have few options aside from the patron to satisfy their needs. Such an environment leads to the establishment of 'authoritarian clientelism' (Fox 1994), where the patron is in essence a monopolist/monopsonist in the rural economy (Bhaduri 1977), which enables him to influence his clients' behaviour and their third party interactions (Basu 1986). However, if one relaxes either of these two conditions, i.e. lowering inequality to create multiple patrons or increasing connectivity in order to provide peasants with exit options, the patron's ability to impose sanctions – and thus control third party interactions – are weakened considerably. The focus of this paper is on the latter of the two conditions. It will argue that connectivity can lower peasants' dependence on the patron by breaking his monopoly/monopsony in the village economy, and thereby his ability to block their decision to engage in collective action.

Making use of case studies from rural Punjab, Pakistan, the paper will show that increased connectivity through the construction of roads substantially increased

peasants' ability to engage in collective action, even when dominated by a large patron. In fact, the case studies reveal that when faced with the possibility of losing clients to the external market, patrons not only restrained from blocking peasants' collective action, but actually went as far as to assist them in such activities. Ironically, the patrons' motivation for assisting his clients in an activity that could possibly have weakened his level of control was his desire to maintain the integrity of the hierarchical network and thus his level of control.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 1 briefly looks at the literature on collective action, highlighting how the environment in which citizens try to mobilize has a significant impact not only on their ability to successfully engage in collective action, but also on the scope of the projects that they can undertake. The section then explores the role that clientelist networks play in the peasants' decision to engage in collective action, focusing particularly on the effect of a strong patron within an isolated village economy. Finally, it analyses the change in this relationship when peasants get access to outside markets. Section 2 looks at four case studies based in rural Punjab, Pakistan, to illustrate the effect connectivity, through road networks, can have on peasants' ability to successfully undertake collective action projects, even when they reside in villages dominated by a strong patron. Section 3 concludes.

1. Collective Action in Context

Collective action is the ability of citizens to come together for activities believed to be in their common interest. Prior to Olson's (1971) work it was generally believed that in the presence of common interests, groups would form to take advantage of these benefits. Olson (1971) challenged this idea by arguing that rational individuals had an incentive to free-ride on other peoples' efforts so as to minimise the costs to themselves while still enjoying the benefits. This implied

that collective action would almost always fail.[1] Although this argument was widely accepted, countless laboratory findings have since documented that collective action succeeds far more often than Olson's theory predicts (see for example Camerer 2003, Ostrom and Walker 2005, Ostrom 2000, Cardenas and Ostrom 2004). For instance, Olson's assumption that individuals make their decisions relatively insulated from social relations is contradicted by laboratory experiments finding increased chances of successful collective action when people engage in face-to-face interaction (Ostrom and Walker 2005) and that an individual's decision to free-ride is significantly affected by his perception of the other participants' trustworthiness (Ostrom and Ahn 2009). These are but a few of the experimental results which indicate that in order to investigate the dynamics of collective action more carefully we need to move beyond the restrictive assumptions of Olson and understand how individuals' preferences and motives are shaped by their social context (Ostrom 2000).

1.1 Collective Action Based on Horizontal Networks

When investigating the chances and types of collective action among peasants in developing countries, it may therefore be useful taking into account that village communities are often characterised by strong ties between individuals of relatively similar backgrounds - such as kinship groups or families (see for example Ahmed 1972, Epstein 1962, Cheema and Mohmand 2004). These networks build on what the social capital literature has referred to as bonding social capital (Gittell and Vidal 1998; see generally Putnam 2000). Due to their ability to transmit information effectively, they are able to curtail the collective action problem by making free-riding visible. This provides a strong incentive to participate in collective action, as not doing so could lead to sanctions – some as strong as social ostracization (Svendsen and Svendsen 2004). However, the potential of relying on such networks for collective action may be fairly limited for two reasons. Firstly, ties between people of relatively similar backgrounds leads to little diversity, particularly amongst the poor who have few resources to

[1] The only exceptions were when the group size was small enough to make free riding observable or when individuals received some selective benefits from participation, which were not extended to non-participants.

bring to the network. So, while the poor in developing countries may have extensive social ties amongst members of their kinship groups or families, this rarely enables them to improve their well-being, as members of such networks often lack sufficient skills and resources (Szreter 2002, Putnam 2000). As argued by Granovetter (1983), strong social ties can have the disadvantage of being closed to outside information regarding new opportunities, thus hampering innovation and effectiveness when engaging in collective action. Secondly, the ability of such networks to engage in successful collective action would be confined to projects whose benefits are restricted to group members only. For projects with benefits spilling over to other communities, the free riding problem arises once again.

Hence, for activities which require higher levels of resources and skills, and whose benefits spill over to other groups, collaboration needs to span across communities. It needs to build on bridging social capital, i.e. relationships and cooperation between, rather than just within, communities (Gittell and Vidal 1998; see generally Putnam 2000). For instance, rather than relying on a specific kinship group or family, collaboration would have to involve several groups. While relying on relatively weak ties – such as belonging to the same village - this form of cooperation enables individuals to enjoy access to varied skills, resources, connections and information (Granovetter 1983). It typically takes place in societies where individuals of different background are able to signal their trustworthiness so as to sustain cooperation (Grief et al. 1994, Janssen 2006). Once established, such cross-collaboration can allow members to draw on a wide range of resources to successfully engage in relatively challenging forms of collective action (see for example Wade 1988, Krishna 2002, Baker 2005, Grief et al. 1994).[2]

[2] Naturally, the existence of bridging social capital does not preclude individuals from also relying on their bonding networks, and Krishna (2002) finds that societies often rely on both types of social capital to engage in various types of collective action projects.

But despite spanning communities, bridging social capital is still a horizontal network established between members with relatively equal levels of power (Halpern 2005). In societies with strong hierarchical networks, collective action would have to take into account asymmetric power relations and the impact they have on the effectiveness of horizontal networks. The insights on how bonding and bridging social capital can facilitate and sustain collective action, therefore need to be complemented with an understanding of relationships between members of unequal status - such as patron-client networks – and how they interact and/or influence horizontal networks. Unfortunately, few have investigated the dynamics of collective action under hierarchical networks in much detail, and, as I will argue below, those that have, tend to treat patron-client networks as homogenous relationships independent of time and place, leading to somewhat simplified conclusions. But before proceeding, it is worth introducing patron-client networks, and their relevance for the chances and types of collective action we would expect.

1.2 Collective Action Under Hierarchical Networks

In rural societies in many developing countries, the combination of state failure, market failures, and high levels of inequality has meant that peasants need to approach the local landlord to act as a patron in order to satisfy many of their basic needs. The patron provides peasants – his 'clients' - with goods and services such as employment, housing, shelter, guaranteed subsistence, physical security, protection against third party exploitation[3] and access to public resources (Scott and Kerkvliet 1977). In return, the client reciprocates by providing a steady supply of cheap labour, increasing the patron's social status by enhancing the size of his clientelist following, and providing political support by agreeing to vote for the candidate supported by the patron.[4] The rate at which these goods and services are exchanged is determined by the relative bargaining power of the two parties. Scott (1972) argues that, while for the peasants this is largely affected by factors

[3] This is not to say that the patron does not exploit them (see below).
[4] For a detailed discussion of patron client networks see for example Schmidt et al. 1977, Scott 1972, Powell 1970, Bardhan 1980, Bell 1988.

such as scarcity of land, population growth rates and extent of state power[5], for the patron it is impacted by the extent to which clients have alternative options in the form of support from their kin or village networks and the availability of unoccupied land for the peasants to use. As we shall see below, this is key to understanding the dynamics of collective action in this context.

Moreover, the relative bargaining powers are also impacted by the number of services provided by the patron. In villages with high inequality the patron essentially becomes the main provider of multiple services to the peasants, resulting in markets getting interlinked (Basu 1986, Bardhan 1980, Bhaduri 1977).[6] As a result of this, the costs of disagreeing with the patron, in any market, becomes extremely high as it has consequences in all the other markets in which the patron interacts with his clients. This gives the patron considerable leverage over his clients and enables him to make demands which can interfere with their independent relationships (Basu 1986). One example could be a demand that his clients ostracise any peasant who does not comply with his wishes, something the clients would do in order to avoid being sanctioned themselves.[7] Such control empowers the patron to make highly exploitative demands of the peasants.

Thus it is not surprising that those contributions that have dealt with peasant collective action under patron-client networks have been rather pessimistic. First of all, Putnam (1993) makes the somewhat intuitive point that collective action between actors in an asymmetrical power relationship – i.e. between the landlord and the peasant - is severely hampered by the fact that sanctioning the powerful is difficult.[8] Secondly, and more important for my purposes, several contributions have noted that hierarchical networks may also preclude collective action amongst the horizontal networks that co-exist alongside it, i.e. collective action among

[5] The inability of the state to provide its citizens with vital services such as security and access to public goods increases their dependence on the patron.
[6] Markets are said to be interlinked when the equilibrium in a single market is jointly determined with the equilibria of other markets (Basu 1986).
[7] For a detailed analysis of this relationship see Shami (2010a).
[8] While not central to the literature on social capital, cooperation of this kind has occasionally been referred to as linking social capital, i.e. relationships and cooperation between individuals of unequal power (Woolcock 2001).

peasants themselves (Putnam 1993, Popkin 1979). In order to sustain his bargaining power, the patron is argued to minimize his clients' horizontal networks (Popkin 1979), whether through the use of violence, privileged access to state resources, or his ability to manipulate ties and monopolistic control over village resources (Putnam 1993, Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984, Roniger 1990, Scott 1972, Holzner 2004). Following from this argument, it is conjectured that participation in clientelist networks would significantly decrease the amount of collective action peasants engage in, irrespective of the purpose.

Furthermore, besides explicitly blocking collective action, the patron-client network also has an adverse effect on peasants' ability to engage in collective action due to the strain the network places on peasants' horizontal relationships. This happens due to two reasons. Firstly, the fact that peasants can potentially ostracize a fellow peasant on the demands of the patron, should limit the scope of horizontal networks as peasants can no longer rely on each other for support when sanctioned by the patron. Such threats are also likely to minimise the level of trust and cooperation within a rural community, both of which are seen as integral for collective action (Putnam 1993, Svendsen and Svendsen 2004, Ostrom and Ahn 2009). Secondly, clientelist networks require peasants to compete against one another for the patron's limited resources in order to fulfil their basic needs, once again possibly lowering their level of trust and cooperation (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984). Combined, the effect is then to reduce both the scope and the cohesion of the network, which should significantly limit its ability to overcome the collective action problem. For this reason as well, the literature predicts low levels of collective action in a patron-client network.[9]

However, this conclusion is based on the key assumption that clients have limited, if any, exit options resulting in them being firmly tied to the local patron. For instance, Southern Italy, which was one of Putnam's (1993) case studies, was

[9] Studies that do find collective action to emerge under clientelist networks document them as being conflictual (see Auyero et al. 2009 for an overview of this literature on social movements). However, Auyero himself argues that patron-client networks and contentious collective action need not always be in conflict.

found to be isolated from the centre of the country due to the absence of road networks and any market centre located near the hinterlands (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984). As a result peasants had no option but to approach the landed nobility to satisfy their needs. The question is, however, what happens when you change the environmental setting by exposing villages to the external market?

The next sub-section will argue that the patron-client network need not, in fact, be detrimental to peasants' ability to engage in collective action. Provided peasants have access to alternative options, clientelist networks – even those where the patron owns most village resources – should not necessarily weaken peasants' horizontal networks nor should they necessarily be able to interfere with clients' independent decision to engage in collective action.

1.3 Connectivity, Patron-Client Networks and Collective Action

The ability of the patron to exert high levels of control over his clients is dependent largely on the peasants having few alternative options to the patron to satisfy their needs. As argued by Bhaduri (1977) and Basu (1986), such control should arise when high inequality is found in areas which are isolated from the external economy. While inequality concentrates resources in the patron's hands, isolation restricts the number of outside options available to peasants. However, neither inequality nor isolation is sufficient in and of themselves for the patron to control his clients' activities. It is rather the combined effect of the two that creates a monopolist/monopsonist patron (Bhaduri 1977) with the ability to interfere with peasants' independent relationships (Basu 1986). An increase in collective action under an authoritarian patron can, therefore, be achieved either by reducing the levels of inequality in the economy – through re-distribution policies – or by reducing the level of isolation faced by the peasants.

The focus of this paper is on isolation as a limiting factor to peasant collective action, and here the key expectation that follows from these observations is simple: even in the presence of inequality, the authority of any single patron will be weakened by breaking the isolation of the village economy as peasants will

then be able to approach multiple service providers, thereby altering the relative bargaining power in the relationship.[10] This should have a three-fold effect, all of which are relevant to understanding the dynamics of collective action under non-isolated patron-client networks. Firstly, as mentioned above, connectivity should break the monopoly/monopsony power of the patron, resulting in a reduction in peasants' dependency on his resources (Michie 1981). Moreover, the new alternatives found in the external economy should increase the peasants' opportunity cost of interacting with the patron – from below subsistence to the returns they can get from their outside options – thus making their time more valuable. While the extent to which clients benefit from the outside market depends on the amount of opportunities the economy has for unskilled workers (Platteau 1995), even in their limited form opportunities in the market would typically be less exploitative than those found in an isolated village economy dominated by a large patron. Secondly, an increase in outside options should reduce the level of competition between peasants for the patron's resources, as any need not satisfied through the patron can potentially be serviced in the external market. This should reduce the friction patron-client networks create in isolated villages amongst peasants' horizontal ties. Lastly, the increase in peasants' access to exit options should limit the patron's ability to impose sanctions on peasants, as availability of the market means that the patron is no longer able to use the threat of withholding access to his resources to influence peasants' actions (Blok 1974, Wingrod and Morin 1971). The patron's inability to impose economic sanctions should also constrain him from using social sanctions against peasants, as he may no longer be able to coerce clients into ostracizing a non-complying peasant. The absence of such social sanctions should help improve the cohesiveness of peasants' horizontal relationships, enabling them once again to engage in collective action to self provide.

[10] In the absence of inequality village resources would be spread over a large number of households, thus disabling any single resource holder from providing peasants with all the goods and services they need.

In fact it can be argued that, in the presence of alternative options, it is now the peasants who can sanction the patron if he behaves in a manner they deem detrimental to their welfare.[11] These sanctions could be economic, by choosing to work in the market rather than for the patron, or political by not agreeing to vote for the candidate supported by the patron (especially one that does not channel public spending towards them), or social by choosing to withdraw from the clientelist network completely. The outcome is then a change in the relative prices of the goods and services being exchanged within the network. While the value of the clients' time and support should go up in accordance with their increased opportunity cost, the patron's resources, when placed in competition with alternative forms of provision, would lose most of the monopolistic value they enjoyed under isolation (Michie 1981). According to Scott and Kerkvliet (1977) such a change should cause the legitimacy of the patron, and thus the integrity of the patron-client network, to come into question, as the network is only deemed legitimate as long as the inequality of the exchange is maintained, i.e. the value of the goods and services given by the patron exceeds those that the clients offer in return.

When faced with these changes the patron would weigh the costs and benefits of altering his demands made on the clients. While the costs deal with a reduction in the surplus he can extract from the peasants, the benefits would be continued clientelist support. These costs and benefits would have to be weighed against the outcome if the patron continued to make high demands, in which case he would stand to lose his cliental following.[12] Therefore, given that the clients continue to be important for him, at least for political reasons, the patron has an incentive to modify his demands so that they reflect the changes in the local economy (Scott 1972). Along with other positive welfare effects, this should increase the clients' freedom to engage in collective action. Hence, we need to look at the context in

[11] Of course, this is dependent on the extent of opportunities available in the external market (Platteau 1995) and the household being willing to take the risk of leaving the patron.
[12] A breakdown of the existing patron-client network need not mean the end of clientelism. It might simply result in the poor establishing vertical links, possibly with different terms, with new actors in the economy (Scott and Kerkvliet 1977, Fox 1994).

which patron-client networks exist in order to understand whether they are detrimental to collective action amongst peasants' horizontal networks. By focusing on the connectivity of the network, this adds yet another level to our anticipation of the chances and types of collective action in the patron-client context, as illustrated in the last cell of Table 1.

Table 1: Collective action under horizontal and hierarchical networks

		Collective action among peasants
Horizontal networks	*Based on bonding social capital*	Limited to projects whose benefits can be restricted to the community.
	Based on bridging social capital	Extensive and varied.
Hierarchical networks	*Isolated*	Fairly limited as the patron should block it.
	Not isolated	Has the potential for being extensive and varied.

To investigate the levels and types of peasant collective action under clientelism, I turn now to four case studies, selected based on a natural experiment in rural Punjab, Pakistan. I will argue that the construction of a motorway allows us to isolate the interaction effect between hierarchical networks and seclusion on the levels and types of collective action amongst peasants. Being case studies, they are intended to be merely a starting point to investigate the relationships between clientelism, connectivity, and collective action. However, their conclusion, when viewed in conjunction with the evidence from Shami (2010a and 2010b) is revealing: while giving peasants credible exit options from the village economy does not break patron-client networks completely, it can considerably increase peasants' ability to engage in collective action for the purpose for self provision successfully.

2. Empirical Analysis[13]

The reasons for situating the case studies in Pakistan are two-fold. Firstly, Pakistani villages have extensive and varied patron-client networks, with some areas being dominated by large landlords, who have almost complete control over the peasants, and others having a multitude of patrons competing against each other for the peasants' support, making them relatively more responsive to the needs of their clients.[14] Secondly, poor infrastructure has meant that a large number of rural villages in Pakistan are extremely secluded from the external economy. As a result, most peasants have limited interaction with outsiders as bad road networks makes travelling to these unconnected villages extremely cumbersome, thus keeping traders out. Moreover, large scale poverty makes the cost of the journey to the external market almost prohibitive, thereby confining peasants to the rural economy (Rouse 1988). In 1998, however, Pakistan built a motorway connecting Lahore, a major cosmopolitan city, to Islamabad, the capital. Along the 365 km of the road there are multiple exits, each of which has a link road that runs to the nearest city/town, passing through a number of villages which were previously isolated from the outside economy. Since the construction of the motorway[15] there has been a marked increase in traffic and a substantial reduction in transport costs for villagers in its proximity, enabling peasants to travel affordably to near-by cities and towns.

The decision regarding the placement of the motorway was made by the federal government based on three main considerations – geography, connectivity and defence (Republic Engineering Corporation Limited 1988).[16] Firstly, efforts were made to ensure that the road ran through as few geographical hazards as possible

[13] All interviews were in Urdu and have been translated by the author.
[14] The main determinant of the type of clientelist network a village has in place is the land tenure system in the area, as established by the British revenue collecting agency in the 1800s (Nelson 2010). While the Pakistani government has made several attempts towards land reforms so as to break the hold of the dominant landlord, these have all been in vain as landlords have used loopholes in the law to preserve their landholdings (Husain 1989, Zaidi 1999).
[15] When talking about the motorway reference is being made to the link roads.
[16] Mr. Chaudry Muhammad Altaf, Chairman National Highway Authority, interview, 15 April 2008.

so as to minimise the risk of road accidents.[17] Secondly, the federal government wanted to connect these two major cities with a motorway that was not very close to the old highway, and one which passed through as many towns and villages as possible without hampering the economic benefits to traders.[18] Lastly, the Air Force has a bombing range situated between Lahore and Islamabad which made some of the suggested routes unusable. None of these factors are systematically related to specific village characteristics.

There were rumours however, that the placement of the road was changed from the original plan so as to allow it to run past the lands of large landlords. While I was unable to find evidence to confirm this, I identified areas where the motorway was not altered from the original plan in any way. Among these was Hafizabad, Punjab. In the area selected for this study the landlords, while commanding considerable authority in their own villages, would be considered part of the lower middle class in urban settings. This was quite evident from the houses they lived in, the cars they drove, the schools they sent their children to and their own levels of education. Therefore, they lacked the influence needed to alter the federal government's decision regarding the placement of a national highway. Hence the decision to make the motorway run through this area was independent of individual village level characteristics, making it an exogenous shock to the village economies and social relations.

Within the district eight villages were visited, with four being dominated by a large landlord and four having relatively dispersed land ownership. The villages also differed in their level of isolation; four had the road run through them and the other four were situated between eight and eleven kilometres from the road. Therefore, the village selection provides four types of villages; isolated landlord dominated and peasant based villages and connected landlord dominated and

[17] Particular attention was paid to a salt range situated between Lahore and Islamabad, as passing through the salt range required the construction of winding roads which, it was believed, would increase the chances of motor accidents. Therefore the government wanted to minimise the stretch that ran through this area.

[18] The benefits of connecting additional towns and villages had to be weighed against the costs of the route between the two main cities being stretched to facilitate increased access.

peasant based villages. Apart from their level of isolation the villages were very similar. We can see from table 2 that 68% of households close to the road and 69% of those that are far away derive their primary source of income from agriculture, working as self-cultivators, sharecroppers, tenant farmers or agricultural labourers. However, even though almost 70% draw their livelihood from land, 51% of households close to the road and 54% of those that are far, are landless. Moreover, the road has done little to reduce poverty in the villages as the average monthly spending of households was $109 and $101 for those situated close and far from the motorway, respectively.[19] These spending levels were meant to sustain, on average, 8 people living in a 3 room house, and enabled only 80% of households in connected villages and 74% in far away villages to consume three meals daily. Moreover, illiteracy is relatively high in these villages with 50% households in connected villages and 48% in isolated ones being headed by an illiterate person.[20] Despite this 75% in villages far from the road sent their children to school, illustrating the importance placed on education. The corresponding figure for villages in proximity to the motorway was 78%.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	Villages connected to the road	Villages far from the road
Percentage households engaged in agriculture	68%	69%
Percentage households who are landless	51%	54%
Average household spending	$109	$101
Percentage of households having three meals a day	80%	74%
Average number of rooms in the house	2.95	3.2
Average number of people in the house	8.3	8.3
Percentage of households headed by an illiterate person	50%	48%
Percentage of households sending their children to school	78%	75%

[19] Most households claimed to spend everything they earned.
[20] The head of the household's education level is important because he or she is the main decision maker.

Given the similarity between the villages we can make the counterfactual that prior to the construction of the motorway, the outcomes in villages close to the road would have been fairly similar to those found in isolated villages. Data from the villages was collected from two main sources; key respondent interviews and household level surveys.[21] Key respondents were individuals who enjoyed a special place in village society, such as headmasters, school teachers, maulvis (the Muslim priest), the household holding the title of revenue collector under British rule,[22] the editor of the local newspaper or the local patron. The household level surveys were conducted by a team of 14 surveyors, supervised by myself, over a period of three months. The surveying process involved mapping the villages,[23] identifying the biradery (kinship group) of each household and then interviewing a random sample of 20% of households stratified along biradery lines, as literature on South Asia documents this as being a good proxy for social status and relative bargaining power (see for example Alavi 1972, Ahmad 1977, Cheema and Mohmand 2007). The aim was to ensure that the sample was representative of all biraderies so that the results were not biased due to over or under sampling of particular social groups.

2.1 The Villages

As you get on the link road for the motorway exit to Hafizabad City you enter a village called Kot Serwar. Passing through you are struck by the hustle and bustle around the main road, which does not taper off as you pass other villages en-route to Hafizabad City. People are found either mingling in the various shops and cafes, or waiting for the bus to take them outside the village, or trying to hitch-hike to their desired destinations. And then there are those who just loiter around the road as that is now the centre of the village where all the activity takes place. As our bus passes by, little attention is paid to me and my surveyors, as ours is but one of the many vehicles that stream past in any given minute. Traffic and

[21] A total of 383 household surveys were collected.

[22] Introduced during British rule, this was the office of the numberdar. Even though the office of the numberdar has been abolished, the family that held the title still enjoys a certain elevated status in the village.

[23] There are no official or unofficial maps of these villages. My maps are the first record of the layout of these villages, at least since 1947.

mobility is not something foreign or unaffordable for these villages, with peasants often travelling outside the village – either for work or to run errands or simply to take their children for a day out in town. But this was not always the case. I was told that prior to the construction of the motorway, travelling to the nearby town was quite an expedition, requiring peasants to leave at sunrise and return before sunset, as the dark and deserted road at night made them sitting ducks for thieves and robbers. And given that the journey itself took an hour each way, work in the city had to be rushed. Now, it takes twenty minutes to Hafizabad City and with the constant traffic peasants have the luxury of leaving at around nine in the morning, and are able to stay for dinner, and return safely late at night by bus, wagon or a hitch-hiked ride.[24]

As we take a turn off the motorway and drive to the 'isolated' villages, the scene changes considerably. Very quickly the comfortable metal road is replaced by a bumpy dirt trail, requiring us to slow down considerably, as the road is infested with potholes. Traffic thins out the further you go along, and often ten to fifteen minutes pass before another mode of transport, private or commercial, is seen. In fact, it is more common to see people walking or sitting on donkey carts than to see cars, buses or rickshaws. The closest isolated village we visited is situated only eight kilometres from the link road, yet travelling there took around forty minutes. And that was on dry days; on a rainy day the journey would have taken even longer. As the 'road' – or rather the trail – reaches the village, the scene we are greeted by is starkly different. There is no one around to be seen, no people waiting for rides, no cafes and no loiterers. Moreover, the path leading into the village is very narrow so we carry on by foot. The centre is found deep inside the village, but unlike the villages on the road there is only one general store there, which also functions as the village tea shop. The few other stores are run from private houses and are thus scattered around the village. Socialising, I found, was done within houses rather than in public areas.

[24] Key Respondent 1, Interview, Connected landlord dominated village 1, 30 April 2008.

As I made my field trips to other isolated villages, the landscape turned out to be very similar. For all these villages bad road networks meant that few outsiders came visiting, leaving the village economy relatively closed. For the peasants there, the journey to Hafizabad City was typically around an hour. But it was not so much the distance that villagers found to be a hurdle; rather it was the lack of transport facilities. The peasants spoke of having to often wait up to an hour and a half to get a ride into town, and once there they were faced with the problem of trying to find a way to make the journey back home. Therefore unless they had their own mode of transport, leaving the village was something they tried to avoid.[25]

Besides impacting peasants' mobility, these differences also have far reaching implications on their dependence on the village and its resources for fulfilling their basic needs. As can be seen from Table 3, far more peasants situated on the road felt they could rely on the external market for satisfying their needs than those in isolated villages. This can be attributed to the increase in traffic, as it exposes peasants to new opportunities not only outside the village economy, but also within it. One of the ways households took advantage of these new opportunities was to sell small products to passers-by, which was something my surveyors and I experienced as we were constantly approached by someone or the other trying to sell us goods varying from slippers to food to little crowns made out of flowers and branches. In the isolated villages, on the other hand, limited interaction with the external economy meant that most peasants felt confined to the village economy and the agricultural sector within it. Thus the only ones approaching us were little children curious about the 'outsiders' from the city.

[25] Key Respondent 2, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 13 May 2008;
Household interviews, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May 2008;
Household interviews, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May 2008.

Table 3: Employment Opportunities

	Villages connected to the road	Villages far from the road
Percentage of households who feel confined to the village labour market	37%	49%
Percentage of households who feel confined to the agricultural sector	49%	63%
Percentage of households who feel they can generate an income from passing-by traffic	65%	39%
Number of households	190	193

2.2. Levels of Collective Action

Walking around the isolated landlord dominated villages it was hard to miss the low levels of public goods provision. Most neighbourhoods had muddy streets, soiled with household waste due to the absence of functioning drains.[26] As Shami (2010b) documents, peasants there had the lowest levels of public investment out of all the villages visited. But while they thereby had the highest need to engage in collective action for the purpose of self provision, few households had ever done so. This was perplexing, at first, as equally poor and equally isolated households in peasant based villages were much more active in working together to self-provide (see also below), despite the fact that they actually had high levels of state provision to begin with.

The reason for low levels of community based projects in isolated landlord dominated villages, as explained by my key respondents, was that the landlords

[26] This waste, besides making it important to pay close attention to where one placed one's next step, resulted in a significant increase in insects in the area.

greatly 'frowned'[27] upon such activities, and asked peasants to approach them instead if they had a problem.[28] And disobeying him was not an exercisable option. As argued by Shami (2010a), inequality combined with isolation, deeply entrenched the peasants' dependence on the patron, as he was not only the main provider of employment but also the main source of credit, housing, dispute resolution and access to the local politician. This empowered him to make high demands of his clients, one being to restrict their collective action. As one household noted, *"The landlord is our village head, our elder,[29] and the protector of our children. If he tells us not to try and fix things ourselves, how can we possibly defy him?"*[30] Households were perfectly aware that given the isolated nature of their village, they would be excluded from the village economy and community if they went against the wishes of their landlord. *"Where would we go if we defied him?"* [31] one household responded when I questioned why they so willingly obeyed the landlord's wishes, while another asked, "*How would we feed our children if he cuts us off?"*[32]

The threat from the landlords however, was not always implicit. In response to peasants trying to provide irrigation channels with the help of an NGO in one of the two landlord dominated villages, the landlord had gone as far as threaten with violence any household that assisted in these activities.[33] Not surprisingly, he himself denied ever doing such a thing:

> *"I have never stopped the villagers from engaging in collective action. But you must understand that these are poor people who are unable to fulfil their own needs. Also they are not educated people like you and me. They don't know how to provide themselves with the things they*

[27] The villagers were extremely cautious when talking about the landlord. They always started off by saying that he is our elder and the head of the village and that they are extremely grateful for the mercy he shows them.
[28] Key Respondent 3, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 13 May, 2008.
Household ID 45, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
Key Respondent 9, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 21 May, 2008.
[29] Being an elder in Pakistani culture commands a high level of respect and authority.
[30] Household ID 42, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
[31] Household ID 45, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
[32] Household ID 286, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May, 2008.
[33] Key Respondent 10, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 21 May, 2008.

> *need. That is why I tell them that they should come to me and not try to self-provide."*[34]

His 'belief' that uneducated people cannot engage in collective action was clearly misguided, as poor uneducated households in all other types of villages were found to have no difficulties engaging in community based projects. Moreover, as was acknowledged by the patron in one of the landlord dominated villages close to the road *"Being uneducated does not mean that the villagers are unaware of their needs and how to go about fulfilling them."* [35] Nonetheless, for the sake of argument, I asked him whether he was available to village peasants, given that he had told them to come to him instead: *"They are like my children, I've told them, my door is always open and they can come to me whenever they need anything."*[36] The peasants, however, saw things differently. During my field trips to this village, I myself observed how they tried to reach the landlord by loitering outside his main gate in the hope of talking to him. When his car pulled out of the driveway they swarmed around it, trying to catch his attention, but not once did he roll down his window to talk to them. The only time peasants in the isolated landlord dominated villages could reach their respective patrons was when they held 'court' a few times a month.[37] But despite their inability to communicate their needs, the patrons' monopoly over village resources meant that peasants found it 'cheaper' to simply refrain from engaging in collective action: fixing or providing a public good might be important for a household, but not important enough to risk being punished or ostracised by the all powerful landlord. The end result was a gross under-provision of public goods in these villages.

The situation in landlord dominated villages close to the road was starkly different. Despite having higher levels of public investment, a large number of

[34] Landlord 2, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May, 2008. I have kept the landlord anonymous to protect my key respondent's identity.
[35] Landlord 1, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May 2008.
[36] Landlord 2, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May, 2008.
[37] Key Respondent 2, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 13 May, 2008.
Household interviews, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May 2008.
Key Respondent 10, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 21 May, 2008.
Household interviews, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May 2008.

households reported engaging in collective action for the purpose of self provision. And unlike the isolated landlord dominated villages, peasants faced no constraints from their patrons when trying to undertake such activities. Given that peasants had access to alternative employment opportunities, both within the village and outside of it (see again Table 1), even though these patrons controlled most of the resources in their respective villages, they were by no means monopolists/monopsonists. Therefore, they had limited ability to interfere with their clients' independent activities. Hence in contrast to peasants in isolated landlord dominated villages, who spoke of an alliance driven out of necessity and desperation to fulfil their basic needs,[38] peasants in connected villages engaged in the clientelist relationship because they found it beneficial. This was evident from peasants' responses when asked why they considered the landlord their patron: "*He provides for our needs,*" [39] was a typical response close to the road, or "*he listens to us and does good work around the village*," [40] or simply *"he is a good person".*[41]

The patrons' responsiveness to their clients was evident from their general availability. In one of the villages, this was easily observable as the landlord was often seen walking around the village socialising with the peasants - something interviews confirmed was not unusual[42] – and in the other peasants said that if the need arose they could always reach the landlord through his manager (he did not himself reside in the village). Furthermore, in contrast to patrons in isolated landlord dominated villages, patrons, instead of blocking their clients' collective activities, were actually reported to have assisted in them. I was informed that the landlords often came to see how the projects were progressing, and occasionally assisted financially or by giving management advice. [43] In fact, in an interview

[38] Household ID 37 and 45, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008. Household ID 286, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May, 2008.
[39] Household ID 249, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
[40] Household ID 396, 393 and 407, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
[41] Household ID 281 and 284, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008. Household ID 386 and 411, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
[42] Key Respondent 6, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
[43] Key Respondent 1, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 30 April, 2008.

with one of the local school teachers I was told that the patron in his village had given peasants the idea for various projects they could undertake, and encouraged peasants from all biraderies to come and assist in these activities.[44] During field-work my surveyors and I heard many similar stories. Some households reported their patron "*gave us money to buy the materials we needed*",[45] and others talked about how "*he visited the site to see how the project was going*."[46] Thus in contrast with Popkin's (1979) expectation, large patrons in villages closer to the road were therefore not blocking their clients' collective activities. On the contrary, in these villages, the hierarchical bonds between peasants and landlords actually appeared to be working in the peasants' favour, as it gave them access to additional resources and expertise.

The landlords' incentives to assist the peasants were arguably two-fold. Firstly, since connectivity altered the relative value of the goods and services exchanged, patrons had to offer more in the relationship in order to still have access to most of the services provided by the peasants (labour, political backing, etc.). As the local school teacher in one of the villages told me, *"he helps us in our collective activities because he wants our votes. If he does not help the community get collective goods he would not be able to attain our political support."*[47] The feeling that they had something to give in the relationship was also expressed by the households in their survey interviews, as households asserted that now they had options other than the patron and unless the exchange with him was beneficial they would not hesitate to pursue those other options.[48] Therefore, in order to sustain the desired balance of exchange, the patrons facilitated collective action

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Key Respondent 5, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 20 April, 2008.
See also household interviews later.

[44] Key Respondent 1, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 30 April, 2008.
Household ID 369, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.

[45] Household ID 393, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.

[46] Household ID 264, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.

[47] Key Respondent 1, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 30 April, 2008.

[48] This was particularly true when talking to the younger generation in the household.
Household ID 258 and 266, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 381, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.

for the public goods that they were unable to broker through the local politician.[49] As stated by one of the patrons in an interview:

> *"If I treat them well and help them in their collective activities, they will be more inclined to help me if I ever need anything. And while I do not really need their help, they do assist me in my fields during harvesting and sowing season. Also during elections the peasants are more likely to align with me politically if I help provide them with the goods and services they need."*[50]

Secondly, since the landlords were no longer able to stop collective action – an activity that Popkin (1979) argues may be used by peasants against them – joining it instead could subdue any collective resentment that might arise against them.[51] Thus the change in the patrons' incentive structure, as brought about by connectivity, meant that peasants actually relied on the hierarchical patron-client network to assist them in their collective activities. This will become even clearer as we look at the character of the collective projects below.

But first let us end this section by turning to peasant based villages. As alluded to earlier, collective action levels were here fairly high, both close to and far from the road. In peasant based villages dispersed land ownership had led to the establishment of multiple patrons, each having to compete against one another for the peasants' services and cliental support. Such competition worked in the peasants' favour by providing them with alternative options to their patron for satisfying their needs – the alternative being to join another patron's network. These options significantly curtailed any single patron's ability to interfere with his clients' independent relationships. Moreover, competition meant that, similar to connected villages, peasants only chose to stay with their respective patron because they received certain benefits. This came out quite clearly in their responses as to why they considered someone their patron. These ranged from

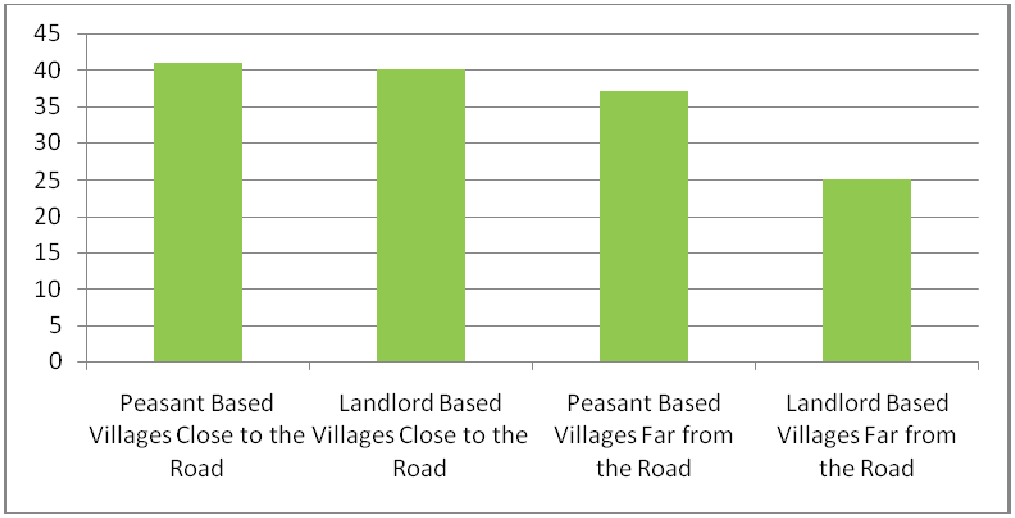
[49] While public provision in landlord dominated villages close to the road was relatively high, it was still not universal (Paper 2, Figure 1).
[50] Landlord 1, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May 2008.
[51] It can be agreed that people are less likely to resent someone trying to assist them in providing for their needs.

him catering to their needs[52] to having certain personality traits they found attractive – such as being a good leader and/or being a good person.[53] Given the competition amongst patrons in connected as well as isolated villages, it is not surprising then that patrons in both types of peasant based villages were found to assist their clients in their collective activities by giving either financial support or offering advice and/or their expertise.[54]

It appears, therefore, that the effect of connectivity has been to change patrons' behaviour in landlord dominated villages so as to resemble patrons in the relatively egalitarian peasant based villages. This is shown clearly in Figure 1 below. While only 25% of households engaged in collective action in isolated landlord dominated villages, 40% did so in similar tenured villages when situated close to the road. This difference is significant at the 5% level. Moreover, once connected to the external market, the levels of collective action in landlord dominated and peasant based villages tend to converge as the difference between the two is insignificant. Lastly, the quantitative data support the findings of field interviews that even when isolated, households in peasant based villages faced few hurdles towards their collective activities, as the difference in levels of collective action in isolated and connected peasant based villages is insignificant.

[52]Household ID 162 and 164, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
[53] Household ID 211, interview, isolated peasant based village 1, 9 May, 2008.
Household ID 144 and 193, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
[54] Household ID 135, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
Household ID 216, interview, isolated peasant based village 1, 9 May, 2008.

Figure 1: Has the household ever engaged in collective action?



However, Figure 1 does raise the question that, given the level of control enjoyed by patrons in isolated landlord dominated villages, how did 25% of households still manage to engage in collective action? The explanation, perhaps, could lie in the types of projects these households engaged in, particularly if they differed in nature and substance from those undertaken in other villages.

2.3. Types of Collective Action

The household projects undertaken in the villages can be broadly divided into two types; neighbourhood and village level projects. Neighbourhood level projects were small-scale activities, such as paving streets and building or repairing drains. These projects typically involved people from the same biradery coming together, as biraderies tended to cluster around the same area in the villages, thus making use of bonding social capital. Village level projects, on the other hand, involved activities such as repairing the wall around the mosque or the school building, cleaning the village water well, repairing the village transformer station, and so forth. These were projects whose benefits extended to most households in the village and thus required peasants from different biraderies coming together, making use of bridging social capital.

Of the 25% of households who engaged in collective action in landlord dominated villages, around half were involved in projects meant to provide themselves with functioning drains and paved streets. The scale of these projects was so small that they were unlikely to provide peasants with the critical mass needed to collectively bargain with the landlord. Moreover, while the projects may have resulted in stronger bonding social capital amongst the poorest communities, this did not necessarily threaten the landlords' control as it is questionable how much these communities can achieve, even in a group.[55] Therefore the landlords had little incentive to invest time and energy in blocking such activities on the part of their clients. But despite households having engaged in these community driven projects my surveyors and I observed that most lacked the goods they had set out to provide, indicating that their attempts to self-provide had failed. Nonetheless, these households did not feel they could communicate their needs to the landlord, as they felt that their poverty made them irrelevant in their patrons' eyes;[56] *"He (the patron) would never listen to us as we are too poor. No one cares about the poor."*[57] As a result they continued to live with muddy and soiled streets.

The other main projects undertaken in isolated landlord based villages were village level projects, which required peasants from different biraderies to come together. Such type of collective action should be threatening to the landlords' control and thus we would have expected the patrons to have blocked them. However, the ability of households to engage in such projects probably stemmed from the specific nature of the projects themselves. Only two village level projects were undertaken by these peasants: repairing the mosque wall and the wall around the school premises. In Muslim societies repairing a mosque is considered a holy activity, which was evident from the pride households expressed in having provided their assistance. Refusing the maulvis' request for their help, the

[55] In isolated landlord dominated villages households are unlikely to withhold their labour from the landlord as they have few alternatives available in the economy. Thus there are no real sanctions the group can impose on the landlord.
[56] Household ID 39 and 46, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
[57] Household ID 46, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.

households reported, would have been a sin as it was part of their religious duty.[58] So if the landlords tried to bar peasants from engaging in such projects, they would be branded as unIslamic and thus stand to lose their legitimacy very quickly. As for working on the school wall, while it was not considered a holy activity, it did involve providing the children of the village with a safer environment to study in, which again would be difficult for patrons to try and stop.

In landlord dominated villages close to the road, the households who engaged in collective action were also equally split between undertaking small scale neighbourhood level projects and more elaborate village level ones. But not only was the scope of the projects much wider in these villages, their success rate was also much higher. Starting with neighbourhood level projects, most households engaging in these activities reported having done so with the assistance of the local patron. They mentioned how the patron would visit the site while they were working[59] and would at times offer advice on how to do things better[60] or would offer his financial or moral support (see also above).[61] Also, unlike their isolated counter-parts, these peasants were much more successful in their collective endeavours – possibly due to their access to greater resources and expertise.[62] Furthermore, village level projects here were much more extensive than those in isolated landlord dominated villages. Households reported not only assisting with the maintenance of the school and the mosque, but also repairing the village transformer station, assisting in dispute resolutions, working on the provision of irrigation channels and mending the graveyard wall. And again all these activities were undertaken with the support and assistance of their respective landlords. In fact, the patron was actually reported to have given the idea for some of the projects the households undertook. "*Given that the graveyard wall was about to*

[58] Household ID 63, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
Household ID 323, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May, 2008.
[59] Household ID 247 and 284, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
[60] Household ID 249, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
[61] Household ID 266, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 419, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
[62] The success was easily observable from them having better functioning drains and well paved streets.

break our landlord suggested that we all come together and rebuild it. He said he would help us, which he did by giving us the materials and advice."[63] Moreover, the patron was also reported to have given the idea to households to repair the transformer station, and again provided a substantial portion of the funding.[64]

Turning to isolated peasant based villages, most households here were found to be engaged in village level projects rather than neighbourhood ones. The explanation for this lies in the high levels of state provision in these villages, as illustrated in Shami (2010b), resulting in most peasants having no need to engage in neighbourhood level projects. Still the few households that did undertake such activities were found to be more successful than those in equally isolated landlord dominated village, as patrons in peasant based villages assisted in the projects. In fact as reported by one household *"in order to ensure that we (the neighbourhood) were able to get functioning drains quickly he (the patron) sent some of his own workers to help us."*[65] Village level projects included fixing the transformer, cleaning the village water wells[66], maintaining the school and mosque, setting up a welfare committee and so forth. As with landlord dominated villages close to the road, patrons not only threw their full support behind their clients' collective activities, but also initiated some of the projects by giving households the idea. For instance, in one of the two isolated peasant based villages the patrons had suggested that households with medical training set up a first aid centre, as the government basic health unit was located in another village. The peasants, of course, were very grateful for this initiative "*Thanks to his (the patron's) idea we now have some place close we can go if our kids get hurt or fall ill."*[67]

Once connected to the motorway little changed in peasant based villages in terms of the variety of village level projects undertaken by households. However, as

[63] Household ID 401, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
[64] Key Respondent 5, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 20 May, 2008.
[65] Household ID 135, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
[66] These are communal wells that everyone uses to extract drinking water from.
[67] Household ID 216, interview, isolated peasant based village, 9 May, 2008.

these peasants did not have as high a level of state provision, when compared to their isolated counter-parts, considerable focus was placed on neighbourhood level projects. Peasants talked about how their respective patrons encouraged them to build and maintain their own streets and drains and assisted them in these activities by providing funds and expertise.[68] With the added help from their patrons, it is no surprise that a large number of these projects were successful at providing peasants with functioning neighbourhood level public goods.

All in all, it is therefore clear that while a quarter of households in isolated landlord dominated villages did engage in collective action, the scope and relative success rates of these projects were limited when compared to the activities of peasants in all other types of villages visited. Isolation combined with inequality meant that patrons were assured of their peasants' clientelist support. They therefore did not have to assist their clients' collective projects, and could even block them at will.

The analysis so far has compared peasants' experiences with collective action across the different types of villages. Before concluding the paper it is worth investigating who within isolated landlord dominated villages was engaging in collective action and who within the villages benefitted from connectivity? Following our discussion in Section 1.2, we would expect some variation in the peasants' relationship with their patron depending on their economic status. Landless households, due to their extreme dependence on the patron, should find the impact of 'authoritarian clientelism' much more constraining when compared to land owning households. Hence, despite both types of households being in a hierarchical relationship in landlord based villages, we would expect systematic differences in their levels, types, and success in collective action activities.

[68] Household ID 81 and 120, interview, connected peasant based village 1, 2 May, 2008. Household ID 344 and 374, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.

2.4. Collective Action, Connectivity, and the Landless

In isolated landlord dominated villages, there was a clear distinction between the types of projects undertaken by land owning and landless households. While the land owning households were more inclined towards village level projects, the landless were much more likely to engage in small scale neighbourhood level projects. However, the limited resources of the landless meant that they failed entirely to provide themselves with functioning public goods (Table 3 below). This could give some weight to one of the patrons' argument that poverty made peasants unable to provide themselves with public goods (see above). This is further strengthened by the fact that the land owning households undertaking neighbourhood level projects had significantly higher success rates. However, the experience of landless households, just a few kilometres away, in landlord dominated villages close to the road, causes us to question whether it was poverty that limited peasants from gaining access to public goods through community driven projects. As can be seen from Table 4, equally landless households in connected villages were much more successful in such activities. The difference between the experiences of isolated and connected landless households could lie in the role their patron played in their collective activities. While in isolated landlord dominated villages the patron blocked such activities, as mentioned above, in connected villages the patron assisted the landless,[69] with two of five projects being successful. Thus while poverty may have been a limiting factor for collective action as it restricted peasants' access to the needed resources, the experience of households close to the road illustrates that it can be overcome.

[69] Most landless households spoke of their patron offering them advice and support, and some also reported him helping them with buying the materials needed (Interviews household ID 238, 284, 247, 417).

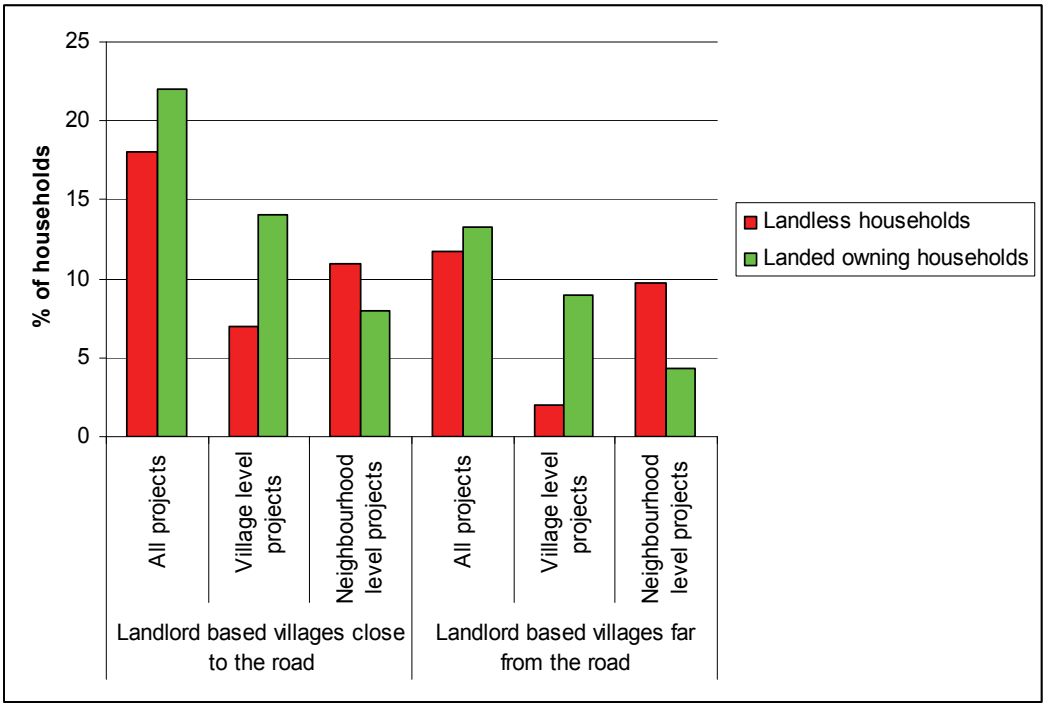
Table 4: Success rate of neighbourhood level projects in landlord dominated villages

	Land owning households	**Landless households**
Close to the road	43%	40%
Far from the road	75%	0%

Lastly, we turn to village level projects, which in isolated villages were mostly undertaken by land owning households. This further explains why the patrons did not block these projects, as they had less control over these households' activities. In landlord dominated villages close to the road, these projects were also mostly undertaken by land owning households, but with a strong presence of landless households as well (see Figure 2 below). Interestingly, some of the village level projects undertaken by landless households were those which were initiated by their patron – for example, that of the village transformer station[70] – and thus they were encouraged by him to come and participate.

[70] Household ID 398, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.

Figure 2: Collective action amongst landless and land owning households



The differences in the experiences of landless and land owning households is also supported by the quantitative survey data. In isolated villages land owning households were much more inclined towards village level projects while the landless tended to focus on neighbourhood level projects. The difference is statistically significant at the 5% level. However, once connected to the motorway, households' economic status no longer had a significant impact on the type of project they engaged in. Not only were landless households more actively involved in community driven projects in villages close to the road, the scope of their activities was also much wider. Thus it appears that the beneficial impact of connectivity is felt most strongly by the landless – and thus poorest - households in the village economy. Hence, while field interviews highlighted the patrons' role in collective action in villages close to and far from the road, and the impact that had on projects' chances of success, the quantitative data illustrates the convergence taking place between households of different economic status in terms of the nature and scope of collective projects they can take part in. The

implication is encouraging: the poorest have most to gain from reducing the isolation of rural villages.

3. Conclusion

According to standard social science theory, collective action should be severely restricted in the presence of strong hierarchical networks. In rural developing economies in particular, patron-client networks should prevent peasants from engaging in community based projects. This paper has argued, however, that such predictions may be overly simplistic by failing to consider the social and economic context in which patron-client networks exist. Rather than being homogenous, such networks are largely dependent on the environment in which they are nurtured. Thus as highlighted in the case studies hierarchical bonds need not always be detrimental to peasants' ability to engage in collective action. In fact, under certain circumstances it was shown to be an added source from which peasants could draw expertise and financial assistance so as to ensure the successful completion of community driven projects.

In particular, peasants in strong patron-client networks were much more likely to engage in successful and varied types of collective projects when they were connected to the outside economy. Unlike the 'authoritarian clientelism' in isolated rural villages, their exposure to new opportunities significantly improved peasants' bargaining power vis-à-vis their landlords. This, in turn, made them just as likely to engage in community driven projects as peasants in less strong hierarchical bonds in peasant based villages. In fact, in environments where peasants had higher bargaining power, landlords were reported to initiate and assist their clients in many community driven projects as a way of maintaining the integrity of the patron-client network. It therefore appears that while inequality naturally defines the nature of clientelism it may only be truly detrimental to peasants' welfare when interacted with isolation, making the landlord a monopolist/monopsonist. Moreover, while evidence from field interviews and quantitative data highlighted an overall increase in the level of collective action in

landlord dominated villages, it also indicated that the beneficial impact of connectivity was felt most strongly by landless households. Once connected to the external economy, households' economic status became irrelevant for the types of projects they engaged in and their relative levels of success.

The changes, as seen in these case studies, allow us to draw broader conclusions about the effect of connectivity on clientelist relationships. Isolation enabled large landlords to make demands of their clients which were found to be detrimental to peasants' welfare. Peasants, of course, had no option but to comply with these demands, as not doing so could threaten their survival. Connectivity has helped to remove that threat. While patrons in connected villages also control most village resources they are no longer able to force peasants into submission, as the availability of exit options means that peasants are able to satisfy their needs in the market if the patron cuts them off. In fact, not only were patrons in connected villages unable to exploit their clients, they actually had to cater for their needs to ensure that the benefits to the peasants of interacting in the clientelist network exceeded, or were at least at par with, the benefits of engaging with the external market. This change was evident both from patrons trying to increase their clients' access to public goods – either by brokering them from the local politician (see Paper 2) or by providing monetary and advisory assistance to community driven projects – and from one of the patron's response to why he was assisting his clients "*If I treat them well and help them ... they will be more inclined to help me.*" [71] Thus connectivity has helped change the clientelist relationship from one which was focused on exploitation and maintaining control to one which is based on cooperation.

Given the emphasis on community based development in recent years, these could be important lessons. They illustrate the importance of analysing the impact of asymmetric power relations on peasants' ability to engage in collective action. Future studies would naturally need to investigate the robustness of the results. As

[71] Landlord 1, interview, Connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May 2008.

a ‘first cut’, however, they do indicate that hierarchical bonds are not necessarily detrimental to peasants’ welfare in general, and their ability to engage in collective activities in particular as long as credible exit options are available. When seen in light of the results from Papers 1 and 2, it appears that a road can go a long way to assisting the rural poor.

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Interview List

Mr. Chaudry Muhammad Altaf, Chairman National Highway Authority, interview, 15 April 2008.

Key Respondent Interviews

Key Respondent 1, interview, Connected landlord dominated village 1, 30 April 2008.
Key Respondent 2, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 13 May 2008.
Key Respondent 3, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 13 May, 2008.
Key Respondent 5, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 20 April, 2008.
Key Respondent 6, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Key Respondent 9, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 21 May, 2008.
Key Respondent 10, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 21 May, 2008.
Landlord 1, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May 2008.
Landlord 2, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May, 2008.

Landlord Dominated villages:

Household ID 37, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
Household ID 39, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
Household ID 42, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
Household ID 45, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
Household ID 46, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
Household ID 63, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 1, 16 May, 2008.
Household ID 249, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.

Household ID 281, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 284, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 411, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
Household ID 386, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
Household ID 264, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 247, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 249, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 258, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 266, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 284, interview, connected landlord dominated village 1, 3 May, 2008.
Household ID 286, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May, 2008.
Household ID 323, interview, isolated landlord dominated village 2, 24 May, 2008.
Household ID 369, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
Household ID 381, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
Household ID 393, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
Household ID 396, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
Household ID 398, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
Household ID 401, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
Household ID 407, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.
Household ID 419, interview, connected landlord dominated village 2, 23 May, 2008.

Peasant Based Villages:

Household ID 81, interview, isolated peasant based village 1, 2 May, 2008.
Household ID 120, interview, connected peasant based village 1, 2 May, 2008.
Household ID 135, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
Household ID 144, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
Household ID 162, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
Household ID 164, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
Household ID 193, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
Household ID 135, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.
Household ID 211, interview, isolated peasant based village 1, 9 May, 2008.

Household ID 216, interview, isolated peasant based village, 9 May, 2008.

Household ID 344, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.

Household ID 374, interview, isolated peasant based village 2, 10 May, 2008.