

# Latent potentials of Reterritorialized Extra-Statecrafts

Exploration of the symbiosis of smooth and striated relations in the zones to enrich the landscape



*The railway in Pakistan after a sandstorm.  
Source: Agha Waseem Ahmed.*

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**Key words:** Extra-Statecraft; urbanization; placelessness; Deterritorialization; smooth and striated; genius loci; the Animist; beliefs and rituals; 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'



*The new port of Gwadar next to fishing jetty.  
Google Earth.*

**Abstract:** The paper investigates the power-relations that define the urbanization of an Extra-Statecraft<sup>1</sup> zone, process them in a phenomenological view of the indigenous people in the case-study of Gwadar, Pakistan. Criticizing the monotonous manner with which the zone Deterritorializes and diminishes existing practices within a context, to argue for the hypothesis that only the symbiosis of smoothness and striation would enrich the landscape, that is otherwise doomed to become a non-place. It raises the concern of the placelessness in recent architecture discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> Extrastatecraft – a portmanteau that means both outside of and in addition to statecraft- recognizes that infrastructure generates emergent new constellations of national, international, intergovernmental and transitional administration and generates undeclared forms of polity faster than any even quasi-official forms of governance can legislate it. See <http://kellereasterling.com/media/esc-infrastructure-as-a-medium-of-polity> .

## **Problem Statement:**

A tendency to design Extra-Statecraft zones on the principles of multiplying causes indigenous cultures to diminish, separating smooth and striated spaces.

## **Research Question:**

What is the potential evolution of the Extra-Statecraft as a medium of information between logistical flows and indigenous people?

## **Sub-questions:**

Can location-specific spaces reinforce the model of Extra-Statecraft?

How can existing practices in Gwadar take part in sculpting the landscape of the town as a zone?

## **Design Assignment:**

Architecture developed on a 'knowing how' principle based on locally evolved practices (like boat-making)

## **Methodology:**

Gwadar is a militarized city and the access to data online is limited or refracted through the lens of the Pakistani and Chinese government. Therefore, the first part of the research has been carried-out by getting a first-hand information from my tutor, Nishat Awan, who has visited the town on multiple occasions where she met and interviewed locals. Next step was to analyse Pakistan, Balochistan and Gwadar by reading through a series of articles and papers covering the history, current situation of the project location and the human involvement in the city. The gathered data was processed by comparing it to the images on sites as Google Maps, Google Earth Pro, Zoom Earth and YouTube videos made by locals, and also comparing the new developments in Gwadar to already existing Extra-Statecraft examples. Screening the truthfulness of the information led to translating it onto a Territory and Borders maps on a regional and city scale to frame the base of the project.

A mix of methods and techniques of research have been utilized to complete the research part and leap forward to define a problem statement to translate into a spatial intervention. A series of case-studies will be used as a reference point to set-up the program and will be methodologically compared to the theoretical framework at each step of the design process.

## Introduction

Water is per se intrinsic to the subsistence of Gwadar, a coastal town in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, where locals utilize the sea as a source of their nourishment through mahigeeri (fishing) and trading. There developed an intimate and mutual relationship between Gwadar and the sea, the meaning of which is so deeply rooted in their life that more than 20 words exist describing water in the Balochi language.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, Gwadar has been mainly oriented towards the Arabian sea rather than the inland of Pakistan for years. This orientation has been enhanced even further by the naturally formed peninsula on which the town is situated, connecting the people of Gwadar to the rest of the country only through a thin strip of land. The sea and more precisely, water, being the resource through which the locals rely on for their livelihood and is, at the same time, being constructed of polarities. Water is defined as the archetype of both concepts of smooth and striated space by the French philosophers, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*. The two terms are established in a fundamental opposition to each other in the way they operate and yet, can only exist in mixture.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, to the Deleuzian theory, Gwadar is in the midst of an urban transformation and both, smooth and striated relations exist simultaneously in the city. Those derived from the fisherfolk communities and their practices and those, from the flow of logistics and capital. The new Gwadar Port is an important logistical stop along the China-Pakistan Economic corridor (CPEC) and is, therefore, transforming, transversing and reclaiming the sea and the land, pushing for Gwadar to take a strategical geopolitical position within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>4</sup> Infrastructural and residential developments are only part of the investments planned for Gwadar as a new zone of Extra-Statecraft in Pakistan. However, amid the transitory momentum in which the town finds itself, displacement and tractions are imprinted on the urban tissue of the town creating tensions between the existence of the locals and the new infrastructure.

The paper investigates the transformation of Gwadar from a small-scale town to a zone of an Extra-Statecraft and the different types of existing relations in the city, how they interact with and influence each other. Seeking for a possible reformation of the form of Extra-Statecraft in its current state by utilizing the existing practices of smoothness and striation, to avoid the common practice of Deterritorialization.

## Below the Surface

Familiarizing with the new plans for Gwadar, it is clear that the new developments are managed and controlled by the investors with the sole thought for the town to transform into a free zone city like many others that appeared over the last three decades. Gwadar's image is narrated to the public through the promotional videos financed by the stakeholders of the CPEC, showing the shiny renders of the skyscrapers to-be with a candid voiceover listing the endless financial possibilities of the gleaming new skyscraper megapolis.<sup>5</sup> Following the same basics, the future masterplan for this megapolis has been planned out along the guidelines of the zone as a template. The striation where each ingredient

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<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.webonary.org/balochidictionary?s=water&search=Search&key=&tax=-1&search\\_options\\_set=1&match\\_whole\\_words=1&displayAdvancedSearchName=0](https://www.webonary.org/balochidictionary?s=water&search=Search&key=&tax=-1&search_options_set=1&match_whole_words=1&displayAdvancedSearchName=0).

<sup>3</sup> Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. University of Minnesota Press, 1987. p. 474

<sup>4</sup> Awan, Nishat, and Zahra Hussain. "Conflicting Material Imaginaries." e-flux, January 30, 2020. See [e-flux.com](http://e-flux.com).

<sup>5</sup> Easterling, Keller. *Extra-Statecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*. Verso, 2014. p. 21

is known before its materialisation because of the multiplying character of the Extra-Statecraft structure. Initially treating the territory as *terra nullius*, the infrastructural system was filled with well-rehearsed order of events products of the zone – industrial and residential areas, highways, resorts, malls, or golf clubs. (Fig.1) Gwadar and its people had to carve their existence onto the new masterplan through a series of protests where a few of their demands were met with many amends. Nevertheless, their position is mostly disregarded in the megapolis vision with no intent of perceiving the local landscape as a source of knowledge to learn from the town’s vitality and liveability, the so-called ‘submerged perspective’ defined by Macarena Gomez.<sup>6</sup>

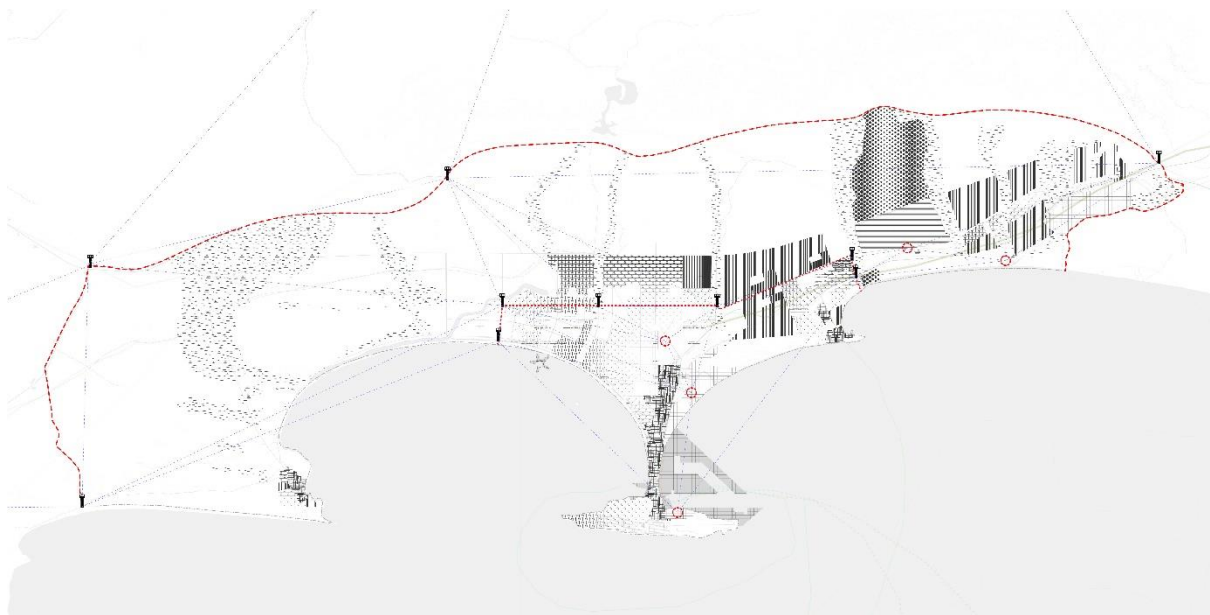


Fig. 1. The masterplan of Gwadar.

This new perception unveils a different angle on what Gwadar is constructed of and will be lost with the advent of the site as an intensified urbanity. Going back in time, the Balochi people have tales for a land of mysticism where witches, magic and djinns were part of the culture of the Makran coast.<sup>7</sup> The stories endured through the time along with people’s beliefs and traditions. Jinns roaming in the sea where the fishermen encounter them but are not the only superstitions, they believe in. Upon entering the water, *mahigeers* pay their respect to the living saint – *Khizer*, who they believe protects and guides them to the shore in storms and high tides.<sup>8</sup> A ritual repeated numerous times that can be characterized as both smooth and striated but also as none of them, it is a third category where the imaginary of people and their beliefs lies in. Elizabeth Povinelli calls it the Animist – where the Life and Nonlife are not opposed but materialised in perceiving life even where others see the lack of it.<sup>9</sup> In Gwadar, a vital relation like this exists between the indigenous people and the sea, going beyond the realm of the water

<sup>6</sup> Gómez-Barris, Macarena. *The extractive zone: Social ecologies and decolonial perspectives*. Duke University Press, 2017. p. 14

<sup>7</sup> Makran coast - mentioned in some sources as Mecran and Mokrān, is the coastal region of Baluchistan. See [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Makran_coast).

<sup>8</sup> Awan, Nishat, and Zahra Hussain. “*Fragile Scapes, Fragmented Lives.*” Laajverd Visiting School 2019 & Topological Atlas project, 2019. p. 37

<sup>9</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: A requiem to late liberalism*. Duke University Press, 2016. p. 35

as a mean of their nourishment and becoming one possessing a distinct spiritual essence of importance to the people. In architecture discourse, it is the *genius loci* of the space that is being lost through the separation of Gwadar from its social, cultural and political practices.

On the land, even the soil is considered sacred and every house has an enchanted tree called Chish, where the djinns are believed to live and hold a supernatural importance in the household.<sup>10</sup> These trees are ancient and should not be cut or used for shade, however, species like the Kikar trees were used by the *wados* (boatbuilders) for the building of the traditional wooden boats. Boat-making is a craftsmanship Gwadar is famous for in the region and the neighbouring countries and requires a team of master builders who have a range of knowledges from the behaviour of the wood to the one of the waters where the boat will be used. Intricate procedures that take a period of 6 months for the completion of each boat and are currently being replaced by the mass-production of the fibre boats because of their low-maintenance. One type of striation taken over by another but also tearing-up a deeper connection between the *mahigeers*, *wados* and their boats, one of an Animist nature. Bringing Gwadar, a step closer to a non-place.

*The boats are deeply connected to our lives, if we do not have the boats, we do not have our life.*

*If we do not have our boats, we would be like fakirs (destitute).*

Mahigeer, 2019.<sup>11</sup>



Fig. 2. Fishermen working on their boats.  
Source: Nishat Awan.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 8.

## Reclaiming the Sea

For centuries, Gwadar, had been established as a town of interest with a history of conquerors claiming it for their own, but none stayed to establish a rule. A leading factor for the terrain to remain less developed was its extreme inhospitality.<sup>12</sup> The inarable land made the people to turn to the sea as a mean to survive and the city developed around the fishing industry to become an important free port in the Arabian sea with its strategical location to the Gulf and South Asia. Par excellence, the sea is a smooth space that has experienced strict striation the moment people started to navigate through and map it out based on precise observation of the sun and the stars. Waqa and Naqa are amongst the stars the fishermen's of Gwadar still use to orientate themselves when and where the sea is full of fish. Organizing it through the system of meridians and parallels, longitudes and latitudes, transforming the surface of the sea into zones.<sup>13</sup>

On a larger scale, the coastal town and its waters were just a grain in the Desert, with infinite relations, no hierarchy or order, or in that sense - in a state of smoothness. The smooth being, where all becoming occurs, with no traction or friction. Understanding Gwadar, however, one discovers well-known practices that developed in time and were layered through generations. Striation - where knowledge of the seabed debris was acquired, and locals fell into a rhythm of routines. Patterns emerged from the daily lifestyle of the fisherfolk. Fishing communities in the town settled in around the fishing areas and had claimed their right on the sea for centuries, translating it from a smooth to a striated space over time through their practices.

The striated space being a process of understanding and organizing through the means of measuring of visual qualities, metric multiplicities and time. Being able to know what particle and where in the system would be located by using one's knowledge and applying it in the specific situation.<sup>14</sup> Striation, however, is also where progress is made - there where arguments, tensions and conflicts are taking place, lays the provocation for change. The ambitions of the Chinese and Pakistani government expressed through the CPEC infrastructural developments are the catalyst for that change in Gwadar. A transformation that started back in 2007 with the inauguration of the new port and has brought hope for new opportunities in Gwadar but also started the process of redistribution of land and sea. Fisherfolk communities were the first to relocate from their neighbourhoods for the construction of the new port and directly affected the established rhythms in the town. The construction of the Gwadar East Bay Expressway disrupted these routines even further by completely cutting off the access to the East Bay locally known as *Demi Zir*, or front sea – the name speaking for the importance of it, with its rich fishing grounds and relocated the fishing to the *Paddi Zir* – back sea, with its moderate but sheltered waters. Reorientating Gwadar from the x-axis of *Demi Zir* and *Paddi Zir* – of indigenous practices, where fishing industry takes plays, to the y-axis of 'North-South' connecting the town to the rest of Pakistan and China through the six-lane expressway.<sup>15</sup> A new type of striation is introduced by this reorientation, one organized along the flows of logistics and capital as opposing to the fisherfolk practices. As such the city offers "a clean, relaxed, air-conditioned, infrastructure-rich urbanism" that is better recognized globally than the context within which is built, and resembles the other highly prized Extra-Statecraft models of Singapore, Hong Kong and Dubai.<sup>16</sup> However, clearly disconnecting the everyday life of the indigenous people and transforming the urban tissue, to one of *placelessness* -

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<sup>12</sup> Ahmad, Azhar. "Gwadar: A Historical Kaleidoscope." Policy Perspectives: The Journal of the Institute of Policy Studies 13, no. 2, 2016. p. 152

<sup>13</sup> Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. A Thousand Plateaus. University of Minnesota Press, 1987. p. 479

<sup>14</sup> Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. A Thousand Plateaus. University of Minnesota Press, 1987. p. 477-479

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 3

<sup>16</sup> Easterling, Keller. Extra-Statecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space. Verso, 2014. p. 51-52



to become of strict regulation and self-reflexive networks after its completion as a well-established model of the zone.

Gwadar is in a transitory moment, where striated practices are reversed back to a state of smoothness and vice versa, and the action of reacting and adapting to the new system is exercised repeatedly ever since the official start of the CPEC. Fundamentally changing the way locals operate and move in the town by becoming highly controlled and restricted area rather than the promised free land for the 'new Dubai'. That promise has not been materialised along with those of new future and opportunities. Beyond the port and the new road infrastructure, that often ends abruptly or leads nowhere, the town with its people is in a state of stagnation and anticipation, where only nature practices its destructive force over time and weathers the traces of the unfinished CPEC developments.

## Emerging from the Surface

Pakistan, as a formerly colonised country, desires to catch up with the industrialized West and stands equal along them in terms of sophisticated economy, technological infrastructure and a diversity of industrial and service sectors.<sup>17</sup> As many others, they have seen the structure of the zone as a means through which to fulfil that desire to conform, socially and culturally, to a global norm. Following 'the manual' of generating a zone, Gwadar would be a copy of former examples – a disposition of spatial elements that provide information to read those infrastructure spaces but does not unfold the potential within them. The slow urbanization allows us to question the character of the zone that is based on the principles of multiplication but lacking the human involvement and existing town's practices.

In my graduation project, I would explore the evolution of the Extra-Statecraft zone and its 'next generation' as a medium of information and intelligence. Reforming the structure to offer selected economic incentives, tailored to the *existing context* rather than simply multiplying an *existing model*. In that, setting apart the zone of Gwadar to offer new opportunities and to evolve as a structure rather than designing *a factory of landscapes*, repeated over the span of the last three decades.<sup>18</sup> It is the latent potential of the zone's multiplicities and the ability for the space to show the full spectrum of its complexity.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, I want to investigate the operations in combination, relating them to smooth and striated, where one cannot exist without the other and, simultaneously, push each other to transform and develop, as optimally would the model of the zone in combination with the indigenous heritage. It is the reformation from 'knowing that' to 'knowing how' as Gilbert Ryle calls it. The latter meaning to be able to apply a criteria and not merely to satisfy one. It is the ability to execute guidelines and use them accordingly to a specific context by constantly thinking of what is being done while it is being done.<sup>20</sup> Deliberately transforming smooth into striated, and the other way around, and manipulating them as variables in a matrix to the needs of the context-related system.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Jamali, Hafeez A. "The Anxiety of Development: Megaprojects and the Politics of Place in Gwadar, Pakistan. In: *Crossroads Asia*".

<sup>18</sup> Easterling, Keller. *Extra-Statecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*. Verso, 2014. p. 53

<sup>19</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. "Horizons and Frontiers, Late Liberal Territoriality, and Toxic Habitats." e-flux, Journal 90, April 2018. See [e-flux.com](http://e-flux.com).

<sup>20</sup> Ryle, Gilbert. *The concept of mind*. Routledge, 2009. p. 28-29

<sup>21</sup> "# PHILOSOPHY /// Processes of Smoothing and Striation of Space in Urban Warfare." The Funambulist Magazine, July 8, 2015. See [thefunambulist.net](http://thefunambulist.net).



## Conclusion

In the past thirty years, a strive for free trading zones created replicas of the same model-city to appear at a constant speed all-around the world. And with the same speed, if not faster, diminishing existing practices within a given context to enforce a strict regulation. The flaws of the Extra-Stratecraft zones shone with oversaturation of the market with its multiplying nature. As Deleuze says 'even the most striated city gives rise to smooth spaces' and the traces of history, folklore and environment resonate those spaces, enriched with the local rituals and traditions.<sup>22</sup> It is high time to transform the established practices of 'knowing that' to 'knowing how' and explore the evolution of the zone as a geopolitical tool tailored to the specific context.

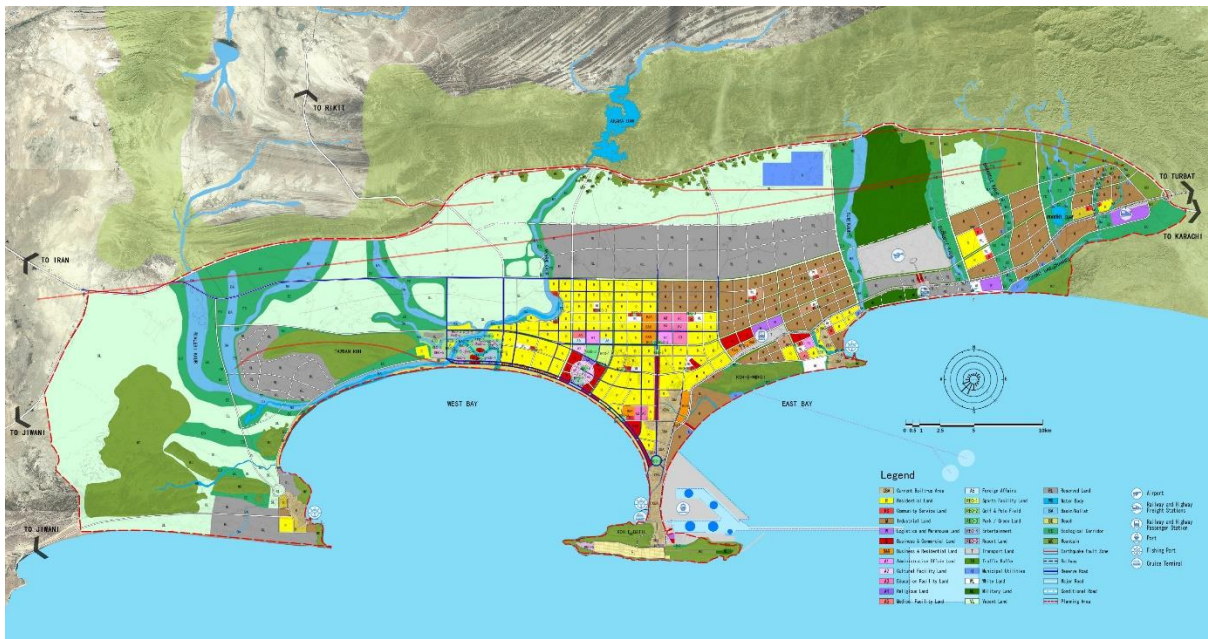
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<sup>22</sup> Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. University of Minnesota Press, 1987. p. 500

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12. Ryle, Gilbert. *The concept of mind*. Routledge, 2009.

Appendix:



Original masterplan of Gwadar.