LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES OF CINEMA IN LAHORE: FROM LAKSHMI CHOWK TO THE VOGUE TOWERS SUPER CINEMA

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Abstract: This paper draws on the burgeoning body of research on 'linguistic landscapes' to examine the interplay between multilingualism, orthographic shifts, the urban built environment, and cinema-going practices in Lahore, Pakistan. In Lahore, Urdu and to an even greater degree English are the languages of education and upward mobility, while Punjabi, despite being by and large the most common mother tongue in both the province and the nation, has remarkably low prestige and is generally looked down upon as a language of rustic crudity. This linguistic hierarchy is echoed in the way people consume and conceive of cinema; mirroring these attitudes, a higher proportion of English and Urdu films from India are shown in more elite and expensive spaces, such as the new multiplexes that have opened in the past few years, and a higher proportion of Punjabi films and local Urdu films are shown in older theaters and more working-class areas. Beyond these distribution trends, this paper looks in depth at language and orthography in these different spaces. Where do signs tend to be in Urdu, in Punjabi, in Romanized Urdu, in English, or in other languages? What kinds of information are conveyed in which languages, and why? By examining the connections between language and the built environment of the cinema, this paper seeks to understand how the public deployment of language reflects the affective resonances and aspirational attitudes related to cinema going--particularly in terms of the complex relationships between social mobility and ethnolinguistic identity--and explores the roles language plays in creating public spaces for socializing, consumption, and the enjoyment of film.

Introduction: *Planet of the Apes* in French in Urdu

In this paper, I focus on the linguistic and orthographic choices made in spaces of cinema consumption, and what those can tell us about the relationships of language ideologies to cinema and its built environment. Where do signs tend to be in Urdu, in Punjabi, in Romanized Urdu, in English, or in other languages? Do media paratexts (e.g. posters, press kits, and other

advertisements) show different patterns of language use than other kinds of linguistic landscaping? And how are these impacted by globalization, cinema cultures, media infrastructures and distribution systems? By examining the connections between language ideologies, cinematic and paracinematic texts, materiality, global capitalism, and the built environment of the cinema, this paper seeks to understand how the public deployment of language reflects the affective resonances and aspirational attitudes related to cinema-going—particularly in terms of complex relationships between social mobility and ethnolinguistic identity—and explores the roles the linguistic landscape plays in creating public spaces for socializing, consumption, and the enjoyment of film.

Fig. 1: Poster for *The Rise of the Planet of the Apes*. Source: Gwendolyn Kirk.[1]

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[1] All photographs in this essay belong to the author.

Walking past the Metropole Cinema in Lahore, Pakistan, a strange image caught my eye: a chimpanzee, with an ominous look on his face and one fist raised to the sky, stood in the foreground glaring at the onlookers (Figure 1). Behind the chimpanzee was a crowd of other apes, some in similarly aggressive postures, and in the background the Golden Gate Bridge stretched across the San Francisco Bay. It was a poster for the 2011 film *The Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (dir. Rupert Wyatt). The presence of a Hollywood film poster in Lahore was not surprising, as many Hollywood films are released here, but the language of the poster certainly caught my eye. The film's title was translated into French as: "La planète des singes les origines;" supplementary text reads: "La Révolution commence" and the release date "le 10 Août." French is a language not commonly seen on the streets of Lahore, and the hand-lettered Urdu text around it offered more information for passersby. The original poster, printed on shiny paper, had been pasted onto a larger, matte white paper sheet, and explanatory Urdu text written on the white border thus created reads:

Pahlī martaba bandarõ ko āpas mẽ Urdū bolte hue dekhiye
(For the first time see monkeys speaking Urdu among themselves)
The four instances of Urdu text written on the original poster read:

Urdū zubān mẽ	(*'In the Urdu language'*)
Meṭropol	(*'Metropole'*)
Se shāndār iftitāh	(*'Grand opening (from)'*)[2]
Lākhõ bandar shahr ke andar	(*'Lakhs[3] of monkeys in the city'*)

This last line may perhaps be an attempt at an Urdu retitling of the film, or just a catchy slogan, as it rhymes in Urdu: *lākhõ bandar shahr ke andar*. What is almost certain is that the French text on the sign is not legible to most of the Metropole's patrons. As Pakistan is a former British colony, the use of English is not uncommon on advertisements and posters, and as a medium of education and a commercial and legal lingua franca. French, on the other hand, is studied in some schools and universities but is relatively rare as a second language. Thus, in the poster example above, the French text takes on an added indexical significance, rather than a merely informative role; the necessary details are provided by the added Urdu text, but the Roman lettering as part of the

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[2] Normally there would be a date here, but it seems to have been omitted.
[3] A lakh is equivalent to 100,000.

original graphic design of the poster indicates foreignness. Roman script is enough to signal that this movie is foreign, with all of the aesthetic promise that implies, and the denotational meaning of the text is much less important. Meanwhile the Urdu text, in addition to enticing and providing logistical information, assures audience members that they will be able to understand the film (with its *Urdu-speaking* monkeys). The Metropole is located in Lahore's Lakshmi Chowk, an intersection with a concentration of movie theaters (there are currently six, but there used to be more) and restaurants. It is a working-class area not far from the city center, and as many film producers' keep offices just a block away in an area known as Royal Park, it is a central hub of film production, advertising, distribution, and consumption.

There is a burgeoning body of work on language in cinema, notably that of scholars such as Barbra Meek (2006), Constantine Nakassis (2015, 2017), Robyn Queen (2015), and others. This research extends a fairly recent intervention in media studies (one that pushes back against seeing the scholarly exploration of cinema as one of floating texts) to include the linguistic dimensions of the media, in particular focusing on questions of language and power and language ideologies. Additionally, recent ethnographic studies of filmmaking and film industries, by scholars such as Brian Larkin (2008), Lotte Hoek (2014), and Anand Pandian (2011, 2015), have continued to do the important work of destabilizing the "film" as a discrete and bounded text by considering the context of cinema production, its materialities and constraints, and a variety of social dimensions. As Hoek argues, "an anthropology of media that proceeds from the theoretical starting point that what the media are and accomplish cannot be read from either their technologies or the society and cultures in which they are embedded require a satisfyingly thick description of the media" (Hoek 7). Examining non-textual and—key for this study—paratextual dimensions of media can offer previously unexplored insights into "cultural practices and circulation that took seriously the multiple levels of identification— regional, national, and transnational—within which societies and cultures produce subjects." In this paper, the focus on language in the landscape of cinemas necessarily also includes a focus on the linguistic choices within media paratexts—in particular promotional items such as posters, trailers, and lobby cards—which "surround texts, audiences, and industry, as organic and naturally occurring a part of our mediated environment as are movies and television themselves" (Gray 2010:23). Paratexts are more than simply advertising, as they are central to circulation of these films in a wide variety of spaces and also create sites around which fan and audience socialities can form (Geraghty 2015). Although relatively under-examined until

recent years, the way paratexts circulate as mass mediated cultural forms and populate built environments means that they are a rich source of semiotic analysis on a variety of levels. This paper primarily considers the film poster and its linguistic content, but connections with other kinds of paratexts and other aspects of paratexts (photography, graphic design, materiality, production) are also potentially fruitful sites of analysis.

In addition to the aforementioned research relating to media ethnography and media paratexts, I situate this paper primarily in the body of work on linguistic landscape (often abbreviated as LL). First described by Rodrigue Landry and Richard Bourhis, the original concept described linguistic landscape as "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings" (1997:25) This formulation laid the foundations for an understanding of what can be learned about spaces and socialities from the written language in public spaces. What sorts of social work does written language do? How does it perform identities and create spaces for both community building and consumption? As Durk Gorter points out, the study of linguistic landscapes "aims to add another view to our knowledge about societal multilingualism by focusing on language choices, hierarchies of languages, contact-phenomena, regulations, and aspects of literacy" (2013:191). He notes that most research on linguistic landscapes has centered around situations of language contact in urban settings (he proposes the alternative term "multilingual cityscape"). Probal Dasgupta (2002) also makes the key intervention that 'linguistic landscaping' is an activity that reflects the agency and intentionality of human beings in constructing the linguistic landscapes that characterize urban built environments. This sort of attention to the role of language in the creation of spaces of consumption also adds a linguistic component to an understanding of spaces as socially constructed (cf. Lefebvre 1991). Moreover, it offers insights into the relationship of language variation and multilingualism to the architecture, infrastructure, and materiality of the built cinematic environment, particularly in an era characterized by what Blommaert and others have defined as superdiversity, a situation characterized by increasingly complex forms of migration, communication, and knowledge circulation (Blommaert 2015). Understanding that contemporary urban environments are spaces where identities (linguistic and otherwise) are continually negotiated and contested also suggests the need for the study of not only linguistic landscapes but also media consumption practices. In this study, my goal is to discover what attention to linguistic landscaping can tell us both about the populations to be found in a given neighborhood or theater,

as well as more broadly about the relationship of language in the built environment to cinematic consumption, capitalism, social mobility, and desire.

Generally, research into linguistic landscapes involves documentation, enumeration, and analysis of written linguistic tokens in a given environment. The spatial scope of this environment could be an entire nation (Buckingham 2015, Lawrence 2012), a city, as in Peter Backhaus' landmark study of linguistic landscapes and multilingualism in Tokyo (2007), particular neighborhoods (Leeman 2009), or particular communities or kinds of space (Lado 2011). Such studies are often comparative. Following this methodology, I completed a survey of two theaters: The Capitol, a working-class area cinema that shows Punjabi films, and the Vogue Towers Super Cinema, a multiplex in the more expensive Gulberg area. I visited both of these cinemas and documented every instance of the display of written language I could find in their exterior and lobby spaces. The architecture, decor, and general environment of these spaces was also noted in detail. In addition to taking extensive photographs, I kept count of the languages in which the writing appeared, the script in which the language was written, and noted particularly interesting signs. However, the linguistic division of English-Urdu-Punjabi is far from clear-cut and is complicated by a few major factors. First, Urdu and Punjabi share a script, Nastaʿlīq, and many elements of their vocabulary are shared, particularly nouns. Thus, it can be impossible to definitively say whether a sign is in Urdu or Punjabi, especially if the amount of text is limited to a few words, e.g. the name of a shop. These kind of ambiguities, a phenomenon Woolard (1998) defines as bivalency, can be highly productive and creative, open to different interpretations from different audiences. Second, English words are commonly borrowed into Urdu and it is not uncommon in Pakistan to see even entire English phrases written in Nastaʿlīq, another example of bivalency (examples of this will be discussed later on). Finally, the writing of Urdu and Punjabi in Roman script is also incredibly common. All of these elements contributed to a complex and multilayered semiotic environment. Finally, it should also be noted that for the purposes of this study, I consider film posters as a separate class within signage. This division is perhaps somewhat arbitrary—one could merely consider film posters with the other forms of advertising—but the film poster, in the cinema hall, comprises a different discursive genre, with different conventions, then the posters advertising Coca-Cola or sales on clothing. Writing on Indian film posters, Ranjani Mazumdar writes that "these posters are supposed to provide the viewer with a basic sense of the narrative through a frozen image whose form is derived from different traditions of popular,

traditional and modernist art cultures" (2003). In addition to image, the data I have collected indicate that language and orthography are also important parts of this design process. Moreover, they suggest that such media paratexts also are inextricably related to the design and infrastructure of the built environment of cinema. As I will argue in detail below, the linguistic landscaping of film posters shows that media paratexts have different aims and perhaps offer different possibilities for their audiences than those seen in other types of signage. By studying linguistic and orthographic choice in media paratexts and overall in the built environment of theaters, this study aims to make explicit the connections between ideologies of written language and spaces of cinematic consumption.

2. Linguistic and cinematic hierarchies in Lahore

Lahore is a cosmopolitan, multilingual city, with a population estimated at around 10 million, including large numbers of immigrant populations from other parts of Pakistan as well other countries, notably Afghanistan. Situated on the Ravi River, it lies not far from the Indian border, in roughly the center of the Punjab region, and is the capital of the Punjab province. The main languages spoken and written in Lahore are Punjabi, Urdu, and English. According to the most recent census data (1998), 44 percent of Pakistanis report Punjabi as their 'mother tongue,' versus 7.6 percent who report Urdu. Although no city-specific data exist, Lahore almost certainly follows this general trend, with likely an even greater proportion of native Punjabi speakers than exists nationally. It should be noted that while from signboards to government documents English may seem ubiquitous in Pakistan, knowledge of English is strongly connected with high social class and education level. English literacy and fluency are far from universal, and generally only the purview of those who have had access to private, English-medium education. As such, English also holds a great deal of importance as a marker of social prestige and economic mobility. This is partly due to the regional history of British colonialism but is also related to ongoing processes of globalization and notions of development and modernity. Urdu, Pakistan's other official language besides English, has historically been associated with official domains, such as government, education, high literature, and news media. It is the emblematic language of Muslim South Asia and the Pakistani state (cf. King 1994, Rahman 1996, 2011). Punjabi, on the other hand, has largely been relegated to unofficial and marginal domains: the home, local markets, alternative literary formations, pop music, and cinema. It is widely considered the ideal language

for jokes and insults, but there are no Punjabi-medium schools, and few newspapers. Christopher Shackle observed in 1970 that in Lahore "there is a generally accepted value-scheme which ranks the three languages in the order English, Urdu, Punjabi" (247). Although there have been some efforts to rehabilitate Punjabi's image, for instance by drawing attention to its past literary glories, this value-scheme remains largely unchanged, and even Punjabi-speaking parents prefer their children to speak and be educated in Urdu, or better yet, English. A recent study by Syed Abdul Manan and Maya Khemlani David (2014) argued that such emphasis on English and Urdu has had an effect of displacement on mother tongue literacy, and indeed many Punjabi speakers who are literate in Urdu report that they cannot read Punjabi, even though in Pakistan it is written in almost the same script. However, it is crucial to note that despite this trend of language marginalization, Punjabis themselves are not an oppressed minority. Rather, as Tariq Rahman has argued, "Urdu serves to extend the power base of the ruling elite," (1996:209) which includes a large proportion of Punjabis, by consolidating their power under a nationalist language ideology that purports Urdu to be the language of national unity. That is, by subsuming their ethnic identity under an ideology that centers Urdu as emblematic of Pakistani national identity, elite Punjabis continue to legitimize their dominant position over other ethnolinguistic groups. Hence a situation has come into being in which speaking Urdu rather than Punjabi is not a marker of 'otherness' but rather of progress, education, modernity, economic mobility, and a particular kind of Muslim cosmopolitanism.

Likewise, there exists an aesthetic hierarchy of cinema in Pakistan, a cultural hegemonic scheme which classifies Western and Indian films as generally superior aesthetically and technologically, with local Pakistani films just in recent years beginning to be able to 'compete' with films from Hollywood and Mumbai, shot in high definition using digital technology. Describing such technologically sophisticated films as "immersion cinema," Tim Recuber argues that "today's intense technologies of exhibition can efficiently and predictably ensure a pleasurable movie-going experience for audiences regardless of, and often in spite of, the film's textual qualities" (2007:327) And indeed, digital films tend to be as much valued for their HD sleekness, special effects, and crisp sound as for their scriptwriting or stories. The aesthetic judgments that put Punjabi (and some Urdu) analog films at the bottom of the cinema hierarchy are tied with a techno-aesthetic teleology that says newer is better. While this received discourse might seem obvious, it is contested by those Pakistani filmmakers who are still making analog films (Kirk 2016a). In Bourdieusian terms, digital films have greater cultural capital than analog films, and

English or Urdu (this includes Hindi/Urdu films from India) films have a greater linguistic capital than Punjabi films. Jillian Cavanaugh and Shalini Shankar have argued that "the material remains critical for the linguistic to make sense" (2012:360) This is certainly true not only for the technoaesthetics of the films themselves, but equally true for the distribution networks of films, the production and circulation of cinema paratexts, and the architectural and infrastructural dimensions of cinema halls. In the case of the Vogue Towers Super Cinema and the Capitol Cinema at Lakshmi Chowk, there are palpable connections between the linguistic landscape, the linguistic and aesthetic dimensions of films themselves, and the cinematic built environment. As discussed in detail below, the use not only of a global style of mall and multiplex architecture but also of "global English" (cf. Mufwene 2010) marks spaces such as the Vogue Towers Super Cinema as shining spaces of modernity and consumption.

In recent years the Pakistani media has heralded a "revival" of Pakistani cinema, based on a wave of digital films made by Karachi-based and often foreign-trained filmmakers that began to be released in around 2013 (Hussain 2016, Khan 2016, Zaidi 2014). This cinema revival is also called "New Pakistani Cinema" (Hamid 2016). Unsurprisingly, these discourses of revival tend to exclude the Lahore-based Punjabi film industry and the Peshawar/Lahore-based Pashto film industry, both of which rely heavily on analog technology—some films continue to be shot on 35mm—and emerge from the styles and practices of local filmmaking communities. In 2016, a total of 51 films were released in Pakistan: 31 in Urdu, nine in Pashto, ten in Punjabi, and one in Siraiki. More than half of these Urdu films were made in Karachi, and most of them are part of New Pakistani Cinema. The geography of these films' distribution—hence, their probable intended audiences—should make their place in these aesthetic hierarchies abundantly clear: Punjabi and Pashto films are almost never shown in multiplexes, as those cinemas tend to be newer, boasting HD projection and digital sound. These spaces exclusively show Urdu and English (Hollywood) films, the one exception I am aware of being Meenu Gaur and Farjad Nabi's 2013 art film *Zinda Bhaag*, that year's Pakistani Oscar entry and not by any standards a typical Punjabi film. Even though their audiences may know Punjabi, they are not considered to be of the social class that would consume Punjabi-language material. On the other hand, older cinemas in working-class areas show Punjabi, Urdu, and English films, but the English-language films are usually dubbed into Urdu in anticipation of working-class audiences who are less likely to be fluent in English. Unsurprisingly, there are also proportionally fewer English films released in these older theaters.

This project takes the basic observation about the distribution of films by language and extends it to look at how written language relates to urban built environments in spaces of cinematic consumption. Moreover, as in Lahore, these spaces are sharply differentiated by both language *and* by technology, this study argues that new filmmaking and projection technologies, new cinematic infrastructures work together with language to create these cinema-going spaces. Faye Ginsburg points out that "concepts such as the Digital Age have taken on a sense of evolutionary inevitability, thus creating an increasing stratification and ethnocentrism in the distribution of certain kinds of media practices, despite prior and recent trends to de-Westernize media studies" (2008:290). As Ginsburg notes, part of this stratification is the use of English as a global language. To navigate many parts of daily life in Pakistan—as in many other non-English speaking countries—a minimum of familiarity with at least the Roman script is increasingly important. For example, mobile phone and computer technology has only recently become compatible with the Urdu script, and even now this capacity is not available on all phones; moreover, public signs and notices are not necessarily posted in both languages; no such regulations require linguistic or orthographic parity. Although a formal linguistic landscape study of Lahore has not been undertaken, the correlation I discovered in cinemas of English with more middle and upper-class spaces, and of Urdu/Punjabi with more working-class spaces, seems at least from casual observation to hold true for most public spaces in Lahore.

Finally, I would like to note the role of Indian cinema in Pakistani film viewing practices. Hindi popular cinema (often referred to as "Bollywood") is massively popular in Pakistan, despite tensions between the two countries.[4] Indian films were first banned from Pakistan in the late 1950s, then again after the 1965 war, Indian films were banned in Pakistan for over 40 years, although they circulated widely on pirated videos, cable television, and more recently via the internet. It was only in 2006 that they again began to be released in Pakistani cinemas, at first as a trickle, and then as a flood. Soon there were more Indian films released in Pakistani cinemas than local ones, and while this relaxed policy has been credited with bringing in enough revenue to save the remaining cinema halls, which were closing by the dozens, and preserve cinema-going culture in

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[4] Hindi and Urdu are not separate languages, but different registers of the same language written in different scripts. Hindi borrows much of its formal and technical vocabulary from Sanskrit and Urdu from Persian and Arabic, but by and large they are grammatically identical. Therefore, Hindi cinema is generally perfectly intelligible to Urdu speakers, and vice versa.

Pakistan, some in the Pakistani film industry blamed Indian films for a further negative impact on their already-struggling industry.

As originally planned, this paper was to include a discussion of linguistic and visual differences between Indian and Pakistani film posters, including trans-orthographic practices between Devanāgarī (the script used for Hindi, Sanskrit, and other languages), Nastaʿlīq, and Romanized Hindi-Urdu (Figure 2); however, a sudden shift in film distribution practices at the time of writing has rendered that research impossible and perhaps even irrelevant. In September of 2016, a series of skirmishes along the border had led to increased tensions between India and Pakistan, with both sides claiming casualties and accusing the other of espionage and acts of war. In addition to the direct military and political impacts of these tensions, the conflict played out in the entertainment industry. Apart from the popular outcry against Pakistanis working in the Indian film industry, Pakistani serials were pulled from Indian television screens, ("Zindagi TV") and the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association banned Pakistani artists—actors, singers, technicians—from working on Indian productions (Shoard 2016). Similarly, Pakistani TV also banned Indian channels, and movie theaters stopped showing Indian films (although, interestingly, there has not yet been any official ban) ("Pakistani cinemas"). Overnight, posters for Indian films disappeared from cinema walls and lampposts, rendering my preliminary data collection on Devanāgarī useless. However, a revealing incident took place while I was collecting some of the data for this paper. I was going to meet up with friends at the Vogue Tower Super Cinema to see *Actor in Law* (2016, dir. Nabeel Qureshi), and arrived about a half an hour before the film began so I could start taking photos and notes. As I walked through the different sections of the lobby, making notes in my notebook and taking pictures of signs, a cinema employee approached me and asked what I was doing. There was an edge of nervousness in his voice, and I explained that I was affiliated with a local university and was interested in how language gets used in public places, whether signs were in English or Urdu or Punjabi and why. "*Acchā*," he responded, relieved. "That's OK then. I thought perhaps you were with some agency, checking to see whether we are showing Indian films!" This conversation hinted at the possibility that this "voluntary ban" might not be entirely so. Ultimately the ban was lifted again in late December of 2016; such shifts in policy point not only to the complex political relationship Pakistan has with its neighbor, but also to the chimeric nature of the Pakistani state's relationship to its own cinema industry.

Fig. 2: Poster for Indian film *Zilla Gha-ziabad* showing Devanagari, Roman & Nastaliq scripts.

The Vogue Towers Super Cinema

The first site I focus on in detail is the Super Cinema at Vogue Towers on M.M. Alam Road. One of Lahore's newest cinema halls, the Super Cinema is among the largest chains of multiplexes and is located on the top floor of a glossy shopping mall. The shift from single-screen theaters to multiplexes has signaled a sea change in Pakistani cinema-going culture. In his discussion of this phenomenon in India, Adrian Athique connects the shift to economic liberalization, globalization and changing cityscapes, arguing that "the multiplex has been indicative of a consistent, if not always coherent, push to create a 'globalized' consuming middle class and a new urban environment" (2011:147). This connection rings true for Pakistan as well, where multiplex construction is largely restricted to middle and upper-class areas, and where ticket prices are often prohibitively expensive for lower middle and working-class viewers. M.M. Alam Road is a major hub of shopping and dining for Lahore's elites, a glittery arcade. In order to control traffic, the length of the road between the two major roundabouts that mark its beginning and end is divided with a high concrete median, thus if your destination is on the other side you must travel to the next major intersection in order to turn around, forced to view the entire row of shops and restaurants, surveying the buffet of brands. Taking the escalator up to the top floors, I could not find a single sign in Urdu, either in Roman or Nastaʿlīq. The only example of Urdu (apart from proper names, one a clothing store called Waseem Noor, and the other a clothing brand, Kayseria, both in Roman) was a single word repeated on a series of signs in the window of a large clothing store called Leisure Club that featured an image of a human body with a tiger head. The tiger-headed person was wearing a t-shirt with an image of Darth Vader, and his hands were raised in the air in a mimicry of claws. The tiger's mouth was open as if it was mid-roar. The text on the sign read:

<div align="center">LEISURE CLUB</div>

PRE-WINTER

VEHSHI

SALE

UPTO [sic] 50% OFF

The only instance of Urdu in the mall outside the cinema area is this word, *wahshī* (Romanized as 'vehshi'), a word meaning 'wild,' 'savage,' 'fierce,' or 'uncivilized.' The same word with the same meaning also exists in Punjabi. It seems there is some poetic quality in *wahshī* which cannot be conveyed by an English equivalent, and moreover I argue that this implies a direct opposition between the 'civilized' English-language mall environment and the wildness, the savagery of indigenous languages, suggesting a linguistic iteration of the classic raw/cooked dichotomy (Lévi-Strauss 1975). The cinema lobby itself included some sofas and benches for sitting, an area with two or three small restaurants (semi-closed off from the main lobby), a counter for tickets and for refreshments, and a small book and gift shop. The lobby's bookshop, named "The Logo Store", featured mugs with posters from Hollywood movies such as *Kung Fu Panda* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*, mobile phone cases, and a small selection of books and magazines—mostly popular fiction and children's literature and all in English, for instance the works of Roald Dahl and Dan Brown. All of these are of course markers of literacy, technology, English, and the West. Unsurprisingly, most of the signage in the Super Cinema was in English but compared to the rest of the Vogue Towers I found that within the space of the cinema there was a slight increase in the number of non-English signs. Apart from film posters, there were 78 signs counted in English, five in Roman Urdu, and seven in Nastaʿlīq script (six in Urdu, one with just a single phrase in Punjabi). All of the signs considered included menus, informational and directional signs (including safety and security instructions), advertisements, and the text on a series of LCD screens spaces along the walls. The LCDs were showing film timings, previews, and advertisements (e.g. for McDonald's, for the Royal Palm Country Club).

In addition to language choice, the overall atmosphere of the cinema has been designed to feel sleek and modern, although the proliferation of advertisements renders it anything but minimalist. It is extremely clean, its floors and counters gleaming. The lighting in the lobby is carefully controlled not to be too bright, rather it is almost on the dim side, perhaps to make the illuminated signage—particularly film posters brightly backlit in recessed frames—and LCDs

stand out even further. Posters are displayed backlit in lighted frames This recalls Mikkel Bille and Tim Flohr Sørenson's proposal of the concept of 'lightscapes' (2007) as a way toward understanding the importance of light as a culturally-mediated element of social life. Along with lighting, temperature is carefully controlled to a comfortable level (in contrast to many older cinemas, which do not have air conditioning), and film songs play in the background, barely perceptible over the drone of people's conversation. The material built space of the cinema has inextricable ties to its linguistic landscape as well, with a high amount of English and Roman Urdu signage and a relatively small number of tokens in Nastaʿlīq or even Roman Urdu (with the exception of film titles on posters). Choice of English and Roman Urdu also may be seen as part of covert attempts to police the kinds of subjects who are allowed into this space.

There are also more overt attempts at policing and surveillance. For example, armed security guards, metal detectors, and pat-downs are routine at most malls, shopping centers, and cinemas but more pronounced in bourgeois spaces such as large malls and multiplexes. In 2015, the newly-built Centaurus Mall in Islamabad (an enormous complex which also includes high-rise apartment housing) began charging an entry fee of Rs. 100 from patrons who were not female, children, seniors, foreigners, celebrities, or those in more high-ranking professions[5] ("Islamabad's Centaurus Mall"). This policy was heavily debated and critiqued on social media for being an attempt to specifically target so-called "Pindi boys," working-class youths from neighboring Rawalpindi who were ostensibly crowding the mall in search of free air conditioning and a place to loiter and ogle upper-class women. However, while this is a rather dramatic example of differentiation and policing of the kind of subject allowed access to such spaces, it should also be noted that of all the informal ways that such spaces exclude working-class citizens, language is a key tool for marginalizing subaltern populations and regulating their movement.

Of the signs in Urdu in Nastaʿlīq script, four were advertisements for Telenor, a telecommunications company, and two, interestingly, were censor board certificates for the

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[5] The full list of those exempted from the entrance fee read: "Children/Kids ages under 12 and Women, Members of Judiciary/Local Administration, Members of National and Provincial Assemblies..., Old Age Citizens above 60 years of age, Armed Forces Personnel, Police, Ambassadors/Diplomats and Foreigners, Government Employees, Law Enforcement Agencies, Special people, Residents of Centaurus, Member of FPCCI, Members of Islamabad/Rawalpindi Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Members of Citizen Developers Association, Member Bar Councils, Members of Print and Electronic Media, Members of Kashmir Council, Chief Executives, Directors, and Managers of national and multi-national companies, Islamabad Club, Gun and Country Club, Jim Khana Club, Creek Karachi Club, Staff of National and International Airlines, Doctors and teaching faculty of all Universities, Famous Players of Hockey, Cricket, Football, and Golf, The famous personalities/celebrities from Film, TV, Drama and Culture etc." (sic)

Fig. 3: Poster for Lahore Qalandars cricket team

Pakistani films being shown. The cinema hall is required to display these publicly; usually they appear in the opening credits of the film, but in this case, they were also photocopied (blurrily) onto normal copy paper and taped to the wall on an out-of-the-way side of the lobby. This was the only instance discovered of what Ben-Rafael et al. (2004) describe as "top-down" signage, that is, government signs rather than private ("bottom-up") signs. And even though their presence might have been mandated by the government, it was clear that the cinema's administration was only paying lip-service to this regulation, and that agency to control the display and use of language in this environment clearly rests in the hands of those responsible for curating this space as one ultimately geared towards consumption. Aside from this token display of Urdu as a language of governance and bureaucratic administration, the final instance of Nastaʿlīq script in signage was a single Punjabi phrase written on a large poster for the Lahore Qalandars,[6] the city's Pakistan Super League cricket team (Figure 3). The phrase *damādam mast* ('intoxicated with every breath'), while bivalent with Urdu, is taken from an incredibly popular Punjabi *qawwalī*[7] in praise of the Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, thus the phrase invokes images of folk culture, popular religious practice, and the enjoyment (another meaning of *mastī*) of listening to the song. If, as argued earlier, legitimate uses of Punjabi language and culture are in the register of folk or religious

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[6] *Qalandar* is a Persian-derived term roughly translatable as 'religious mendicant,' 'ascetic,' or 'saint.'
[7] A major genre of Sufi music in South Asia.

expression, the choice of this particular phrase of Punjabi is not a terribly surprising one. The rest of the poster (the team name and that of its sponsor) is in English.

The film posters themselves showed slightly different distribution patterns than the rest of the signs, hence I consider them as a separate category. Perhaps it is unsurprising that film posters are designed to appeal to film patrons in a different way than the other signs, as they indicate the obvious main attraction of the cinema (not to downplay the importance of socializing, eating snack food, and other elements of the experience). Collectively, film posters were by and large in Roman script (either English or Roman Urdu), with all of the information about the film (e.g. "introducing," "directed by," "releasing") written in English. On posters for English films, the titles were unsurprisingly in their original English, but posters for Urdu films almost exclusively had their Urdu titles Romanized, e.g. *Zindagi kitni haseen hay*.[8] Only two posters showed the use of Nastaʿlīq. One poster was for the film *Maalik*, and it featured a full sentence in Urdu: "*Mɛ̃ Pākistān kā shahrī, Pākistān kā mālik hū̃*" ('I am a citizen of Pakistan, I am the master of Pakistan'). It could be argued that the transliteration of such a long token would be more clunky and difficult to read, thus less effective and eye-catching. But in this case, it could also be argued that the connection of Urdu to tropes of Pakistani national(ist) identity make Urdu *in Nastaʿlīq* a more suitable choice as it is more indexical of this identity. The other example was only a single word on the entire poster; the film title was *Ishq Positive*, and the first word of the title, *ʿishq* ('love'), was rendered in a bold, curvy Nastaʿlīq font, contrasting playfully with the other English words. Both of these examples show that while the atmosphere of the cinema is designed to look and feel as Western/modern/elite as possible (hence the general preference for Romanized titles), there is room for linguistic play, a range of available choices that are made possible by the simple fact that they can be read and understood by their intended audiences.

On a final note, the film itself, although primarily in Urdu (with a few snatches of Gujarati[9] and English), also made a conspicuous display of written English. Unsurprisingly, studies of linguistic landscapes have not included discussion of written language in film, but if we can include this writing as a part of the study, not only were the film's credits in English (admittedly a not uncommon practice in some South Asian cinemas), but the film also had English subtitles. I was

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[8] I have kept the Romanization as given on the posters, which have their own Romanization conventions, rather than using the standardized transliteration I use in other Urdu/Punjabi examples.
[9] Spoken by a Parsi character.

curious about this, not having seen English subtitles in a Pakistani cinema before. After the film, I asked some of the theater staff about the subtitles. At first, they told me it was in case any foreigners were in the audience, but when I pressed him on the question one of them informed me that the film had come subtitled; it was not a conscious decision on the part of the projectionist or the cinema's management.

Capitol Cinema, Lakshmi Chowk

As a contrasting example to the Vogue Towers Super Cinema, I conducted research on the Capitol Cinema in Lakshmi Chowk. This area is still known as a cinematic hub, although several of its cinemas have in the past decade closed down or been converted for other uses. Some of these older structures still exist, but films are currently playing only at the Shabistan, Metropole, Odeon, Prince, and Capitol Cinemas. In contrast to MM Alam Road, this area is predominantly working-class. Although at one time it was a more important commercial center—buildings here date back to at least the 1930s and even the theater names hearken back the heyday of colonial modernity — now its importance has been eclipsed by other areas of the city. It is mostly known for a few famous restaurants as well as a nearby market for car parts. Still, it is a busy area of the city and, unlike MM Alam Road, it has a high degree of pedestrian traffic. I visited the Capitol on a Tuesday afternoon; unsurprisingly there were a great deal fewer people than when I went in the evening to the Vogue Towers Cinema. The Capitol has only one screen; the film playing at that time was *Achhoo Lahoria* (dir. Masood Butt), which was originally released in 2007. There are three shows every day, one at 3:00pm, one at 6:00pm, and one at 9:00pm. It is a common practice in this theater, and in some of the others in Lakshmi Chowk, to re-screen older films on a fairly regular basis. Unlike the films shown in the Vogue Towers, Capitol generally shows films made on 35mm (I haven't received a clear answer on whether they have the equipment to show digital films or not, but the projector I managed to get a glimpse of was a behemoth that, judging by its Bakelite handles, dates back to the 1930s.)

In appearance too, this theatre was completely different. The main obvious difference from Super Cinema is that rather than occupying the top floor of a mall, the Capitol Cinema is a freestanding building. There is a wall built around it, approximately six feet tall, so the lobby is not seen from the street, but between the wall and the building entrance there is a courtyard, generally used for parking, but also as a space for socializing before the film begins. Its art deco

facade was nearly completely obscured by a pair of story-high posters for *Achhoo Lahoria*, which featured multiple images of the hero Shaan Shahid staring angrily into the camera, face spattered with blood and weapons in his hand, flanked by smaller images of the other cast members—scantily clad women in seductive poses, men in traditional Punjabi dress holding up bottles of alcohol, and other subordinate characters. The cinema hall and screen itself were much larger than the individual screening rooms at the multiplex; having a larger number of comparatively smaller screens is a feature of multiplex architecture, but the lobby space was a single room, approximately the same size as in the Super Cinema. There were no chairs or sitting places, except for the small wooden stool on which the ticket checker was seated. There were a few doors leading to restrooms and an office, and one door that lead to a "Ladies Waiting Room," a small room with a few chairs for women to sit away from the crowds while they waited for the show to begin. Along with the architectural differences, this space was maintained in a completely different way than the Super Cinema. Paint was peeling from the walls and the floors, which were a far cry from the sleek and gleaming surfaces of the multiplex. The ticket checker and some of the other men hanging around in the lobby were smoking, and the smell of cigarette smoke permeated the space. Unlike Super Cinema, which even in the daytime is mostly artificially lit (there are windows in the adjacent cafes but none in the cinema space), natural light pours through the windows during the day, and at night it is lit by a relatively small number of lights.

Capitol Cinema had significantly fewer signs that Super Cinema, and nearly all signage here was in Urdu/Punjabi, written in the Nastaʿlīq script. Moreover, a very large percentage of signage comprised of film posters and lobby cards.[10] There were a total of 20 non-poster signs, in contrast to 31 posters and 42 lobby cards. Interestingly, the majority of signage in English was directional, and appeared to be somewhat older than most of the other signs. It was impossible to tell for sure, but thick layers of contrasting paint that surrounded them suggested they had survived several repaints of the lobby over the years. A noticeable addition to the linguistic landscape was Arabic, in the form of four separate phrases. First there were inscriptions above the arch of the main entrance: *mashā'Allah*, *yā ḥayyu yā qayūm*, and the number 786. The first, *mashā'Allah*, is a phrase commonly painted on or sculpturally affixed to buildings, vehicles, and so forth; it roughly glosses as 'God has willed it,' but it is generally used to express appreciation or praise. The second, *yā ḥayyu yā qayūm*, is a phrase of supplication to God ('Oh ever-living, oh everlasting!'), also

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[10] Smaller poster-like film advertisements, approximately 11x15".

commonly seen on buildings or vehicles. In between the *yā ḥayyu* and the *yā qayūm*, each on a separate pane of glass, were the numbers 786. This is considered to be an auspicious number, the numerological equivalent of the phrase *bismillah* ('in the name of God')*,* a phrase often evoked for auspicious beginnings. Above the concessions counter as well there was an Arabic phrase inscribed: *wa'Allah khayr ul-rāziqīn* ('Oh lord the greatest of providers'). Such phrases are commonly written on buildings and vehicles as a way of signaling one's devotion, giving thanks to God and bringing blessings on a home or business, and averting bad luck or the evil eye (*naẓar*).

I counted the wall on which this phrase appears as one single sign, because all of the text appears in white on a single blue background, but it stands out as a fascinating example of the mixture of languages and orthographies (Figure 4). The wall is painted the blue of Pepsi, and the Pepsi logo dominates the visual, appearing six times. There are actually three walls creating one large blue ground, the two walls of the café, really more of a concession stand, and the adjoining wall of the lobby, but here I will focus on just the wall facing outwards containing the window where people place their order. Above the cafe window, this logo is the only instance of Roman script on the entire wall. As is customary, the Arabic appears at the top of the wall, above and slightly to the left of the cafe service window. Below it is written in large letters in Nastaʿlīq: *Kɛpiṭal sinema kɛfe* (the English words 'Capitol Cinema Cafe')*,* and next to this a list of the available drinks, in smaller letters and also in Nastaʿlīq: *Pepsī, ḍiyū, mirinḍā, sewen ap, sṭring dastyāb hẽ* ('Pepsi, [Mountain] Dew, Mirinda, Seven Up, and String [a misspelling of energy drink Sting] are available'). This list is flanked by the word Pepsi in Roman and the Pepsi logo, but also partially obscured by a menu, written in Urdu though featuring the cursive Coca-Cola logo in its top corner, pasted on top. Below the service window is an even larger rendering of the word Pepsi (again in Roman) and its circular logo. To the right is the following list: *Chā'e bargar kolḍ ḍrink dastyāb hẽ* ('tea, burgers, and cold drinks are available')*,* and to the left the following almost identical list: *Chā'e speshal bargar speshal kolḍ ḍrink dastyāb hẽ* (Special tea, special burgers, and cold drinks are available). All of the different scripts and languages are tied together by the Pepsi blue and repeated logos (with the one intrusion by the Coca-Cola menu).

The use of English words written in Nastaʿlīq is far from a straightforward case of transliteration. In fact, every single one of these words—cinema, cafe, burger, special, cold drink, and the brands of drinks—have been borrowed so commonly in Urdu and Punjabi that it hardly seems fair to consider them as of a separate language (another example: *buking āfis* 'booking office' written on the ticket booth). They are fully lexicalized into Urdu and Punjabi, with attendant phonological changes, and many of them (e.g. cinema, burger) do not have indigenous equivalents in any case as the words came along with the introduction of the items themselves. Even though these might be etymologically English, all would be perfectly understandable to native speakers of Urdu and Punjabi. Still, the use of these words and particularly the cache of brands ('brand' itself is by now a fully lexicalized word in Urdu/Punjabi) create connections between the consumer and the culture of late global capitalism; the deployment of brands by consumers, for example wearing a shirt with the Nike swoosh or using a phone with the iconic Mac apple, often itself is a

Fig. 4: Code-mixing at the Capitol Cinema concessions stand.

part of performing globalized, 'modern,' economically mobile identities. Brands in particular have been of interest to those interested in the semiotics of culture and language (Mazarella 2003, Pang 2008, Sherry 2005), who have explored how and why brands are deployed, copied, and transformed. Nakassis (2012) has further argued for the "citationality" of brands, their ability to invoke immaterial qualities, ontologies, and other contexts—in the case of South Asia, particularly "'foreign' places, people, and their fashion," (633)—which is itself central to their performativity. In both of these cinemas we can see not only the brands but also perhaps words such as 'burger' not merely as advertisements but also performing a certain kind of globalized consumption practice—in this case economic and bodily consumption—that has become key to the experience of cinema-going. In fact, in Pakistan 'burger' is actually a common (pejorative) slang term for a person from the Westernized bourgeoisie. Even though they are lexicalized into local languages and written in Nastaʿlīq, there is an argument to be made that these words, in the context of the cinema hall and the blue Pepsi ground, also carry these same connotations.

This argument is supported further by the fact that although, judging by the posters on display, almost all films that play in the Capitol are in Punjabi, there were no signs written in Punjabi. Although many lexical items occur practically identically in both languages, tokens that were grammatically distinguishable as one language or the other were all in Urdu. In a way, this parallels the signage choices in the Super Cinema. (Although the films there are mostly in Urdu, signs were mostly in English or at least Roman script.) Going back to Shackle's proposed prestige hierarchy of languages in Lahore—English, then Urdu, then Punjabi—it seems that there is a marked tendency in cinematic spaces for the signs in the actual space to be one level higher than the linguistic content of the films themselves, thus Punjabi films=Urdu signs, Urdu films=English signs. Similarly, English words in Roman script seem to have the most prestige, followed by Urdu/Punjabi in Roman, followed by English in Nastaʿlīq, Urdu in Nastaʿlīq, and lastly (almost never seen) Punjabi in Nastaʿlīq. These hierarchies are by no means set in stone and are subject to a host of other factors including semantic content, purpose, placement, and so on, but as a general rule these hierarchies perhaps show a commonality of aspiration in the cinema-going experience, that whatever class background viewers may be, a trip to the cinema still tends to be one full of
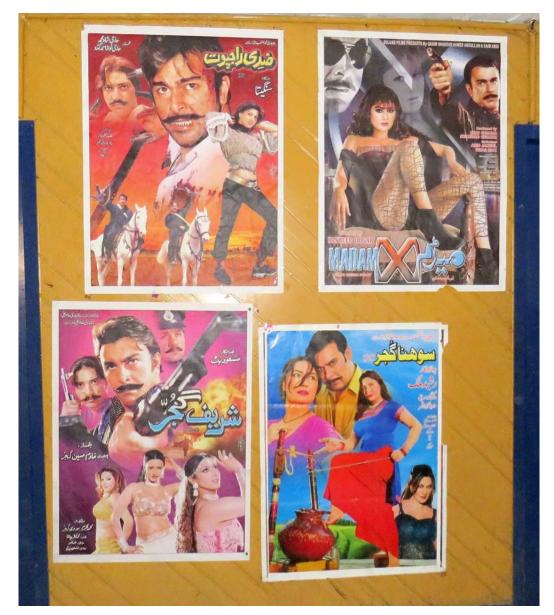
Fig. 5: Posters at the Capitol Cinema, clockwise from top left: *Ẓiddī Rājpūt*
('Stubborn Rajput'), *Mɛḍam X* **('Madam X'),** *Sohṇā Gujjar* **('Handsome Gujjar'),**
Sharīf Gujjar **('Honorable Gujjar').**

promise, escape, consumption, and technological or even architectural modernity. Linguistic landscaping plays a role in this by reinforcing these spaces as ones of upward social mobility; this also may mitigate some of the stigma more generally associated with cinema-going in Pakistan by associating cinema consumption with more prestigious languages and scripts.

As in the Super Cinema, posters in the Capitol also spoke volumes about not only the kind of narrative to be expected in each film, but also their intended audiences. It is worth noting that two kinds of films were advertised in the larger Lakshmi Chowk area at the time of writing; digital Urdu cinema (part of the 'revival cinema'), and analog films, most of which were in Punjabi. Interestingly, the language and orthography of the posters correlated consistently between these two kinds of films. The former kinds of films were of the same type seen in the Super Cinema, with the titles generally in Roman Urdu and the rest of the text in English. The latter type of films, however, tended to be advertised with posters using Nastaʿlīq script, suggesting a direct correlation between the education level of their intended audiences and the films' technological sophistication as well as their narrative content (cf. Kirk 2016b). Thus, in keeping with the fact that it does not yet have a digital projection system, and therefore cannot show the same kind of films that are shown in the Super Cinema, the posters displayed in the Capitol cinema were almost exclusively in Nastaʿlīq. Only four examples (out of 71) were found with titles in Roman, and in all of these examples the title was also present in Nastaʿlīq. The only one primarily in English was the poster for the 2009 film *Madam X* (dir. Rasheed Dogar), which featured only one word in Nastaʿlīq: *mɛḍam* ('madam,' another lexicalized borrowing[11]). This poster was also the only one featuring characters in Western clothing, and from the poster appears to be a spy or action film, rather than the typical rural-set Punjabi action revenge drama (Figure 5). In this case the use of Roman/English not only fits in with this more urban, 'modern,' narrative, but also presents viewers with a more exotic, foreign object of desire. Mostly, however, the posters' visual content—buxom women in suggestive poses, mustachioed men in traditional *shalwār qamīz* or *lachā kurtā* brandishing weapons and covered in blood—as well as the films' Punjabi titles, were highly suggestive of the kind of Punjabi action/revenge drama that dominated Pakistani screens for decades (Ali Khan and Ali Nobil Ahmad [2010] term this 'natural horror') only to fall out of favor in the last ten or fifteen years.

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[11] And one with perhaps potential sexual connotations, given common South Asian notions about hypersexuality of English-speaking or otherwise Westernized women.

Conclusion

Table 1: Comparison of signage between Capitol Cinema and Super Cinema

	English in Roman script	Urdu or Punjabi in Nastaʿlīq	English in Nastaʿlīq script	Urdu or Punjabi in Roman script	Arabic	Mixed scripts
Super Cinema, Vogue Towers, MM Alam Road						
film posters	32	0	0	12 [12]	0	2
other signs	78	7	0	5	0	
Capitol Cinema, Lakshmi Chowk						
film posters	0	71[13]	0	0	0	4
other signs	10	8	3	0	3	1

Table 1 shows a stark contrast between the linguistic landscapes of the two spaces analyzed in the paper. Both are spaces of aspiration, socialization, and consumption, yet the distribution of languages and orthographies across the two environments reflects—at least in the eyes of the linguistic landscapers—extreme differences of class, education, and social mobility in the cinema-going publics in each space. I deliberately chose these as spaces of contrast, suspecting from the beginning that these would be archetypical ones, distillations of the kind of linguistic tension that permeates most social interactions and cultural forms. Yet I want to make one disclaimer, which is that in Lahore as a whole, linguistic landscapes of cinema are not neat, discreetly bounded, or entirely separable from each other. The surrounding streets and connecting roads present an even more complex picture; while a detailed investigation of these is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper, the fact that these smaller linguistic landscapes merely represent pockets in the larger city clearly also has bearing on the scope of this study.

According to Backhaus, linguistic landscape "provides a unique perspective on the coexistence and competition of different languages and their scripts, and how they interact and interfere with

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[12] This number accounts for posters for films whose titles were in Roman Urdu but the rest of the text of which was in English.
[13] Includes lobby cards.

each other in a given place" (2007:145) This paper has tried to extend that perspective to the consumption of cinema and the spaces in which that occurs. However, it is just a starting point; more ethnographic detail, focus on the design and writing process of signage, closer examination of film poster language, and multilayered investigations of the relationships between language and architecture would all be fruitful directions for further investigation. One thing that seems clear is a connection between on-screen landscapes and the built environment of film consumption. The 'revival' films of Pakistani cinema are markedly different from the aforementioned 'natural horror' films that reigned over Pakistani screens for three decades. Featuring song sequences in shiny fantasy-scapes, and largely portraying the lives of urban elite youth, these images of glowing modernity and economic success are mirrored in the shininess and conspicuous consumption of the multiplex lobbies and the ubiquity of English. Part of a completely new filmmaking project—one that attempts to bring into existence a 'national' cinema of Pakistan—they bear marked similarities to mainstream Hindi (Bollywood) and American films, not only in their content and technoaesthetics, but also in linked dimensions such as their linguistic choices, the built environment of their consumption, and perhaps even their target audience, which necessarily must be differentiated from the industries it creates as 'other'. Punjabi films,[14] however, which are still imbricated in earlier, more localized modes of film production, generally speak to a distinctly proletarian character; often in significant ways rejecting the trappings of the modern nation-state. They, unsurprisingly, continue to be disparaged by the elite and upper classes as crude and vulgar. Brian Larkin points out that cinema "is made distinctively modern by [its] ability to destabilize and make mobile people, ideas, and commodities...While often seen as engines of mobility, cinema theaters are also deeply parochial, intimate parts of the urban landscape drawing around them social practices that make cinema-going an event that always exceeds (and sometimes has little to do with) the films that are shown on the screen" (2008:125) That is, a visit to the cinema opens up a space of possibilities—linguistic, aesthetic, experiential—for its audiences. Cinemas are not merely spaces of passive consumption, but spaces that are actively constructed through linguistic landscaping and media paratexts as much as through infrastructure, architecture, and design, and moreover they are spaces that are further contested and negotiated by audiences themselves.

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[14] As well as Pashto films and Urdu films that follow earlier technoaesthetic conventions.

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