# Subaltern Urbanisation in India

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The concept of subaltern urbanisation refers to the growth of settlement agglomerations, whether denoted urban by the Census of India or not, that are independent of the metropolis and autonomous in their interactions with other settlements, local and global. Analysing conventional and new data sources "against the grain", this paper claims support for the existence of such economically vital small settlements, contrary to perceptions that India's urbanisation is slow, that its smaller settlements are stagnant and its cities are not productive. It offers a classification scheme for settlements using the axes of spatial proximity to metropolises and degree of administrative recognition, and looks at the potential factors for their transformation along economic, social and political dimensions. Instead of basing policy on illusions of control, understanding how agents make this world helps comprehend ongoing Indian transformations.

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The phrase "subaltern urbanisation", at one level, is perhaps best seen as a literary device to focus attention on our area of inquiry, to increase the possibility of discursive engagement, arguably in the tradition of another such phrase, viz, "global city". As Robinson (2002: 536) put it:

> If the 'global city' were labelled as just another example of an 'industrial' district (perhaps it should rather be called: new industrial districts of transnational management and control), it might not have attracted the attention it did.

At another level, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that there is a link, howsoever tenuous, with the wide literature on subaltern studies. In particular, there is an attempt in our work to interpret as Guha (1982: 39) says, the "contribution made by the people *on their own*, that is *independently of the elite*" (emphasis in original) and a whiff of reading the official urbanisation data against the grain. To engage and locate our attempt within this intellectual tradition is outside the scope of this paper and our competence. It is for others, with a deeper understanding of this tradition, to critically appraise the relationship, if any.

For the purposes of this paper, subaltern urbanisation refers to autonomous growth of settlement agglomerations (which may or may not be denoted urban by the Census of India) that are generated by market and historical forces, which are not (1) "dependent" on large traditionally important settlements or (b) "planned" cities like Chandigarh and Bhubaneswar or industrial townships like Mithapur, in Jamnagar district, Gujarat. The attempt is to investigate growth of settlements beyond that (1) driven by the economics of agglomeration, as advanced by the new economic geography, summarised by Venables (2005) or (2) directly orchestrated by the state or private corporate enterprise. Of course, the involvement of the state cannot be abjured completely, e g, the improvement of roads and the provision of electricity are all necessary elements in the growth of settlements, but these are usually not spatially directed towards a specific settlement. Others, such as the establishment of a *mandi*, are more spatially focused, but more limited as interventions, compared to "planned" cities.

It is useful at this stage to distinguish this notion from a few other concepts currently in use, such as subaltern urbanism, peri-urban, suburbanisation, exclusionary urbanisation and rurbanisation. Roy (2011: 227) offers two prominent themes, viz, "economic entrepreneurialism and political agency", while advancing the notion of subaltern urbanism. In spirit, there is substantive similarity in our approach. But while subaltern urbanism is an innovative conceptual theorisation

located largely within the large cities of the South, our inquiry relates more to cities as a system and their interrelationships.

Given the spatial expansion of metropolitan cities, research has increasingly focused on their peripheries. Traditionally seen as dependent on the metropolis, growth of such peripheries would ordinarily not fall under subaltern urbanisation. However, Dupont (2007), pointing to the diversity of these spaces, notes that metropolitan peripheries result from a mix of planned operations and unplanned, uncontrolled processes and the flouting of regulations. It is possible therefore that there may be peri-urban growth not "dependent" on metropolitan city.

Suburbs were conventionally seen as residential spaces, with the city as the economic basis. Over time, the suburban economy has diversified with the rise of services. The general inapplicability of the American model has also become apparent. Recently Ekers et al (2012: 407), defined suburbanisation as "the combination of non-central population and economic growth with urban spatial expansion" and include in their ambit, the "process of constructing residential enclaves, squatter settlements, commercial developments, business and industrial parks, and fragmented infrastructure on the peripheries" (p 407). This approach has many philosophical commonalities with ours, (1) in according governance a central place, (2) in focusing on land use, and (3) in recognising the embedded nature of local histories of places and the importance of idiosyncrasy. However, subaltern urbanisation looks at locations well beyond the suburb.

In exclusionary urbanisation, the poor are relegated to the degenerated peripheries (Kundu 2011a). Lanjouw and Murgai (2010) also show that poverty increases with increasing distance from large towns. Though we share with Kundu his concern with inclusiveness, subaltern urbanisation differs in focusing on the nature of agency available outside of the large cities.

The possible interconnectedness of the urban and rural in subaltern urbanisation is also central to the work of Revi et al (2006). Their proposed concept of RURbanism, is about "integrating the urban with the rural – so that there is a co-evolution of the countryside and of the city that is embedded within it" (2006: 58). However, while RURbanism focuses on the "interstitial spaces" that remain between the city and the countryside, with a view to overall sustainability and better understanding of urban-rural linkages, it is less concerned with the question of economic and social transformation and governance that are of interest for subaltern urbanisation.

There are a number of possible intersections between these various concepts and subaltern urbanisation. Since subaltern urbanisation may occur even in peripheral settlements, we are concerned with peri-urban and suburban governance. The foregrounding of autonomy in the concept of subaltern urbanisation means that it has to engage with what happens in the city, in particular, the place of the informal city and the possibility of subaltern urbanism or occupancy urbanism (Benjamin 2008). Urban-rural linkages are likely to be important too, as a process supporting subaltern urbanisation.

Subaltern urbanisation differs from these in focusing on the extent of autonomy of the settlement, not in the sense of autarky, but in the ability to affect its growth process and interact autonomously with other settlements, whether local or global. It also focuses on the spaces away from the metropolis. Subaltern urbanisation should result in vital smaller settlements outside the metropolitan shadow, indicating a pattern of urbanisation that is extensive, widespread, economically vital and autonomous.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the pattern of urbanisation in India, arguing that it supports the existence of such vital small settlements. The section following initiates a conceptual framework for subaltern urbanisation by laying out characteristics and a typology. The final section concludes.

## 1 Pattern of Urbanisation in India

The Planning Commission (2011: 378) believes that "urbanisation in India has occurred more slowly than in other developing countries and the proportion of the population in urban areas is only 28%". Concomitantly, Kundu (2011a: 24) feels that "urbanisation process has...become concentrated in developed regions and larger cities in recent years, with backward areas and smaller towns tending to stagnate". More recently, the results from the Census of 2011 prompt Nijman (2012: 14) to infer that:

> rural-urban migration has been particularly significant to smaller cities, and...it is driven by the poor performance of the agricultural sector in the surrounding countryside rather than by a pull from increased industrialisation in cities.

He opines that the productive capacity of India's cities is a major obstacle to sustainable development.[1] The discussion below examines these assumptions, viz, India's urbanisation is low, its smaller settlements are stagnant and while its villages repel, its cities do not attract. If true, the possibility for subaltern urbanisation would be low. However, we show that these assumptions may be misplaced.

### How Urban Is India?

Is India really under-urbanised? The census definition of urban has been evolving over time.[2] The first post-Independence Census of 1951 did briefly allow that "places with a smaller population [than 5,000] with definite urban character may be treated as separate towns", but the challenge to the size criterion was short-lived. In 1961, the currently used threefold definition came into being. It depends either on an administrative declaration of a settlement as an urban local body (ULB) or on satisfying three conditions, viz, (1) size (greater than 5,000 persons in a settlement), (2) density (more than 400 per square kilometre), and (3) structure of the labour force (more than 75% of the male workforce in non-agricultural occupations).

The last is the formalisation of repeated census injunctions since 1891 that it was "undesirable to classify as towns overgrown villages which have no urban characteristics", foreshadowing the attempt by Wirth (1938) to define urban areas by means of certain behavioural characteristics. As a

definition, it is unique in the world, emphasising the considerable international variance. Qualifying levels even for a single parameter like population could vary from as low as 200 in Norway to 20,000 in Turkey.[3] Urbanisation using national metrics is therefore broadly non-comparable.[4]

But, does the definition really affect the urbanisation rate? Uchida and Nelson (2010) find, using data from the 2001 Census (when the official urbanisation rate was 27.8%), that 42.9% of the population lives within an hour's commute of a large town, defined as one with at least 1,00,000 people, and more than half lives within an hour of a town of at least 50,000 people. In comparison, the same measure for China remains close to the official rate of 36%. According to this measure, therefore, India was more urbanised than China in 2001.

The Indiapolis project, part of the global comparative e-geopolis project, takes a different approach. A unit called a settlement agglomeration (SA), distinct from "urban agglomeration" (UA), a commonly known concept in the Indian census, is constructed on the basis of contiguous built-up area (defined as built-up areas less than 200 metres apart from each other), as discerned from satellite imagery. These SAs are then matched geospatially with settlements from the Census of India to obtain their population. A cut-off level of 10,000 for each SA is used as a measure of urbanisation.[5] A SA may therefore consist of multiple census settlements.

Applying this approach, Denis and Marius-Gnanou (2011) find that compared to towns with at least 10,000 inhabitants, which contained 26.6% of the population in 2011, SAs of more than 10,000 contained 37.5% of the population. States showed dramatic differences, e g, Kerala with its *desakota* settlement structure becomes almost entirely urban.[6] Bihar (31.2%, instead of 10.4%) and West Bengal (46.6%, instead of 27.2%) show the largest differences with the official measure. This is because these large settlements fail to satisfy the official requirement that 75% of the male workforce be engaged in non-farm work. In part, India's low level of urbanisation thus results from using a high level of non-farm employment as one of the tests, uncommon internationally.[7] If one applies different filters, reads the census data "against the grain", as it were, urbanisation in India could be much higher.

## How Concentrated Is Indian Urbanisation?

What is the spatial picture with respect to urbanisation in India? How diffused is it and are smaller cities outside the metropolis really stagnating? We examine this question by first, studying the district-level variations in population growth; second, by scrutinising the extent and location of the new census towns, and third, examining the origins of today's large towns.

**District-Level Variations in Population Growth:** In a given state, population in some districts grow much faster than other districts. Based on the location of high-growth districts in relation to the state or national capital, Mukhopadhyay and Pradhan (2012) classify states into six categories.[8] Furthermore, states are divided into those with single and multiple high-growth

districts. Table 1 presents the results of this exercise for the states with at least 10 districts.

**Table 1: Location of High-Growth Districts**

| | Single Growth Centre | Multiple Growth Centres |
|---|---|---|
| District(s) including state capital | Karnataka | Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa |
| District(s) peripheral to state or national capital | Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab | Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh |
| Other district(s) | Jharkhand, Kerala | Gujarat, Rajasthan, West Bengal |

Five states, viz, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Uttarakhand do not have any high-growth districts.
Source: Mukhopadhyay and Pradhan (2012).

States have different patterns but, apart from Jharkhand, Kerala, Gujarat, Rajasthan and West Bengal, the district that included the state (or national) capital or a bordering district was either the sole high-growth district or one of the high-growth districts. While Bangalore is the only district with the state capital to be the sole high-growth district,[9] Rangareddy near Hyderabad, Mohali near Chandigarh, Thane near Mumbai and Kancheepuram near Chennai were districts peripheral to the state capital that were among the high-growth districts in their states. In addition, Gurgaon in Haryana and Ghaziabad and Noida in Uttar Pradesh were high-growth districts near the national capital. Thus, while Kundu (2011b) is correct in noting the decline in growth of the metropolitan centres (all of which are state or national capitals), in many states, their peripheries are growing significantly faster than the rest of the state.

**Census Towns:** The Census of 2011 shows a large growth in census towns, i e, urbanisation outside recognised urban local bodies. Pradhan (2012) has studied the spatial pattern of these settlements using an unexploited source prepared by the Census of India, which lists all geographical units in 2011 and its mapping with the 2001 Census.[10] Using the population of these settlements from the 2001 Census, it is possible to estimate their contribution to the increase in urbanisation and using their geocodes, study whether they are located in proximity to existing towns.

Pradhan finds that 26% to 29.5% of the urban growth from 2001 to 2011 can be attributed to the recognition of new census towns,[11] varying from a high of nearly 90% in Kerala and 60% in West Bengal to less than 10% in states like Karnataka and Gujarat. By contrast, only 8.4% of the growth in urban population over 1991 to 2001 was due to new census towns. Not all of this growth of census towns is occurring around existing large towns.

Using a differentiated spatial buffer around towns above 1,00,000,[12] he finds that only 37.2%, or 926 (of 2,489) of settlements and 33.6% of the population fall within these buffers, indicating that much of this growth is outside the peripheries of existing large towns. The spatial distribution of new census towns shows that while there is a high concentration in certain districts close to metropolitan cities, the formation of census towns is also widely spread across the country. This indicates that the process of spontaneous transformation of settlements,

reflected in the growth of census towns beyond metros, is a relatively widespread geographical phenomenon.

**Emergence of Large Cities:** The 2011 Census identifies 497 class I towns, i e, those that are more than 1,00,000 in population (including stand-alone class I towns that are not part of any UA). What is the origin of these towns? What were these towns like in 1961, the first year when the current definition of urbanisation was used? Table 2a gives the transition matrix in terms of number of towns, while Table 2b provides it in terms of share of population. Of the 497 towns, 37 did not have any reported population in 1961. Of the 232 that had a population of less than 50,000 in 1961, two are today towns of more than one million. Table 2b shows that while 57% of the population of current million-plus towns lived in towns of 5,00,000 or more in 1961, 9% of the population were in towns of less than 1,00,000 or no reported population. Similarly, 29% of the population of current towns with population between 5,00,000 and one million were in towns of less than 1,00,000 or no

**Table 2a: Transition Matrix: 1961-2011, by Numbers**

| Size 1961 \ Size 2011 | 1,00,000 to 2,00,000 | 2,00,000 to 3,00,000 | 3,00,000 to 4,00,000 | 4,00,000 to 5,00,000 | 5,00,000 to 1 million | More than 1 million | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NA | 16 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 36 |
| Less than 50,000 | 188 | 28 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 232 |
| 50,000 to 1,00,000 | 60 | 35 | 15 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 126 |
| 1,00,000 to 2,00,000 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 9 | 21 | 6 | 58 |
| 2,00,000 to 3,00,000 | | 1 | | 1 | 9 | 9 | 20 |
| 3,00,000 to 4,00,000 | | | | | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| 4,00,000 to 5,00,000 | | | | | | 5 | 5 |
| 5,00,000 to 1 million | | | | | | 5 | 5 |
| More than 1 million | | | | | | 7 | 7 |
| Total | 267 | 83 | 36 | 20 | 45 | 46 | 497 |

Source: Authors' calculation based on Town Directory 2001 and Census 2011.

**Table 2b: Transition Matrix: 1961-2011, by Population Share** (%)

| Size 1961 \ Size 2011 | 1,00,000 to 2,00,000 | 2,00,000 to 3,00,000 | 3,00,000 to 4,00,000 | 4,00,000 to 5,00,000 | 5,00,000 to 1 million | More than 1 million |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NA | 6 | 13 | 5 | 14 | 7 | 2 |
| Less than 50,000 | 67 | 34 | 22 | 10 | 10 | 1 |
| 50,000 to 1,00,000 | 25 | 41 | 42 | 25 | 12 | 6 |
| 1,00,000 to 2,00,000 | 1 | 10 | 31 | 45 | 43 | 7 |
| 2,00,000 to 3,00,000 | | 1 | | 5 | 23 | 10 |
| 3,00,000 to 4,00,000 | | | | 5 | | 10 |
| 4,00,000 to 5,00,000 | | | | | | 7 |
| 5,00,000 to 1 million | | | | | | 11 |
| More than 1 million | | | | | | 46 |

Source: Authors' calculation based on Town Directory 2001 and Census 2011.

reported population. The fact that many of today's large towns today were relatively small in the past indicates the inherent dynamism and vitality of some of these small towns.

Of the 460 towns that existed in 1961,[13] there are 43 that have had an annual growth rate over 50 years of 4.7% or more, i e, an increase in population by 10 times over this period. While many of them are in the peripheries of large cities, 10 do not belong to this category, viz, Nashik, Bhiwandi and Aurangabad in Maharashtra, Surat and Vapi in Gujarat, Rudrapur in Uttarakhand, Akbarpur in Uttar Pradesh, Saharsa in Bihar, Dhanbad in West Bengal and Miryalaguda in Andhra Pradesh.

These towns are some of the possible candidates for a historical study of subaltern urbanisation, to examine their growth factors, e g, while Miryalaguda is a rice town, the growth in Bhiwandi's powerloom sector followed the demise of large mills in Mumbai. Once the threshold annual growth rate is reduced to a less ambitious 4% (sevenfold growth), an additional 27 towns are added (of these 70, only 10 were class I towns in 1961) and more possible candidates appear on the list. Thus, while large metropolises remain important, there is also considerable growth that is happening outside of such areas.

## Economic Health of India's Urban Areas

Is this relative dispersal of population growth matched by an underlying broadening of the economic base? Table 3 does show an employment shift towards cities of over a million, during the period 1993-94 to 2009-10, except for construction, which has moved to smaller cities and rural areas. Despite the shift, metros still account for less than half, and often less than a third of urban employment in all the sectors, including modern services. While urban employment is predominant, considerable non-farm employment is also located in areas classified as rural, reflecting our earlier discussion on measurement of urbanisation.

This employment structure of urban areas, in Table 4 (p 56), too does not appear to justify the kind of pessimism evident in Nijman (2012). While the structure of employment is shifting towards modern services, this is gradual, from 8.7% in 1993-94 to 14.1% in 2009-10 in the metros. Concomitantly, both manufacturing, at over a quarter of the workforce (a little less in non-metros),[14] and traditional services at more than a third of the workforce (a bit more in non-metros) have held their ground for the most part. Combined with an overall annual growth in urban workforce of about 3%, this provides a strong basis for the economic robustness of urban India.

The employment structure of non-metros reflects a diversified economic structure with a stable mix of traditional services, manufacturing and construction. Compared to metros, they have more of construction, as can be expected if they are in the process of increasing their built-up area, and a little less

**Table 3: Employment Shares by Sector** (%)

| Sector | Share of Metros in Urban | | | Share of Urban in Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1993-94 | 2004-05 | 2009-10 | 1993-94 | 2004-05 | 2009-10 |
| Mining | 3.0 | 8.3 | 8.4 | 35.0 | 33.1 | 26.6 |
| Food manufacturing | 10.6 | 16.3 | 12.9 | 35.2 | 33.8 | 37.1 |
| Clothing manufacturing | 22.9 | 33.2 | 33.8 | 52.9 | 58.3 | 61.7 |
| Machinery manufacturing | 39.0 | 44.5 | 41.2 | 70.2 | 74.6 | 72.5 |
| Other manufacturing | 27.6 | 35.3 | 32.8 | 48.7 | 48.6 | 52.1 |
| Utilities | 18.6 | 28.6 | 17.7 | 61.2 | 57.7 | 65.8 |
| Construction | 24.4 | 25.5 | 16.9 | 43.3 | 35.7 | 29.7 |
| Government services | 28.5 | 27.2 | 28.3 | 65.5 | 68.0 | 67.6 |
| Traditional services | 23.6 | 27.9 | 27.5 | 55.6 | 54.7 | 54.6 |
| Modern services | 37.4 | 45.0 | 42.5 | 68.5 | 72.6 | 76.6 |
| Social services | 19.9 | 25.4 | 22.2 | 51.5 | 53.2 | 56.1 |
| Household services | 34.3 | 42.6 | 46.6 | 72.0 | 71.1 | 66.3 |
| Total | 22.7 | 28.7 | 27.0 | 54 | 53 | 52 |

Source: Authors' calculation based on respective NSS employment unemployment rounds.

**Table 4: Employment Structure of Metros and Other Urban Areas** (%)

| | 1993-94 | | 2004-05 | | 2009-10 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Metro | Other Urban | Metro | Other Urban | Metro | Other Urban |
| Mining | 0.2 | 1.7 | 0.2 | 1.1 | 0.2 | 0.9 |
| Manufacturing | 27.4 | 27.9 | 28.2 | 24.9 | 27.0 | 23.1 |
| Food manufacturing | 1.8 | 5.1 | 1.6 | 3.7 | 1.3 | 3.5 |
| Clothing manufacturing | 9.1 | 10.1 | 10.5 | 9.3 | 10.5 | 8.2 |
| Machinery manufacturing | 5.0 | 2.6 | 3.9 | 2.1 | 4.5 | 2.6 |
| Other manufacturing | 11.6 | 10.1 | 12.1 | 9.7 | 10.7 | 8.8 |
| Utilities | 1.2 | 1.8 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 1.3 |
| Construction | 7.2 | 7.5 | 7.6 | 9.7 | 6.6 | 13.0 |
| Government services | 13.1 | 10.9 | 6.3 | 7.4 | 6.8 | 7.0 |
| Traditional services | 34.3 | 36.9 | 33.9 | 38.6 | 34.9 | 36.9 |
| Modern services | 8.7 | 4.8 | 12.0 | 6.5 | 14.1 | 7.7 |
| Social services | 5.0 | 6.7 | 6.3 | 8.1 | 6.1 | 8.6 |
| Household services | 3.0 | 1.9 | 4.6 | 2.7 | 3.5 | 1.6 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: Authors' calculation based on respective NSS employment unemployment rounds.

of some types of manufacturing and modern services, which may benefit from co-location and agglomeration economies. But the share of these activities is by no means insignificant in their economic structure.

## 2 Conceptual Framework

All these aspects taken together point to a picture of urbanisation in India that is dispersed and diverse to an important degree. India may be more urbanised than appears from the official figures, with more than 10% living in dense built-up settlements that do not satisfy the Indian definition. The large cities are important and growing steadily, but 41% of the urban population lives outside the class I towns, and there is growth there too. Indeed the population share of non-class I towns has risen in the last 10 years. The Indian smaller town, far from being stagnant, appears to reflect growth and vibrancy. A number of them have grown steadily and appear to have a diversified economic base.

Even the urbanisation outside the administrative framework reflected in the explosive growth of census towns shows a diffused pattern, spread out beyond the metropolitan peripheries. Clearly there is a need to go beyond metrocentricity, as argued by Bunnell and Maringanti (2010). It does indeed appear that an important, extensive and widespread segment of Indian urbanisation may satisfy our definition of subaltern urbanisation, i e, it is autonomous, economically vital and independent of the metropolis. In this section, we attempt to characterise this subaltern urbanisation.

To recall, subaltern urbanisation refers to autonomous growth of settlements (which may or may not be denoted urban by the Census of India) generated by market and historical forces which are not (1) "dependent" on large metropolises, called metropolitan urbanisation in this section or (2) "planned" cities, separated into administrative and corporate urbanisation.

**Metropolitan Urbanisation:** The Census of 2011 indicates that large metropolises, except Bangalore, are slowing down, but growth is occurring around them. A special case of metropolitan

urbanisation is capital urbanisation, where the city is also the state capital. As seen earlier, the location of the state capital is a factor in population growth in many states. The reason for excluding them from the subaltern category lies in the presumed dependence of this growth on the metropolis. There may, however, be instances of Type II error, i e, false negatives, which we discuss below, where the location may be peripheral to a metropolis, but the process of urbanisation may be independent of it, i e, it may be subaltern in character.

**Administrative Urbanisation:** This refers to the creation of cities by the state, like Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad, Gandhinagar, etc. Such planning of new towns is no longer common, though there are some initiatives like the building of New Raipur.

**Corporate Urbanisation:** This refers to settlements developed by the corporate (private or public) sector, often as part of concomitant industrial activity. The most frequently mentioned example is perhaps Jamshedpur, with a notified area of 59 sq km. Large special economic zones (SEZs) like Mundra in Gujarat, which plans to develop over 100 sq km, or Sri City in Andhra Pradesh are more recent examples, a key difference being that these sites are not linked to a single large industry. Of late, there have also been developments like Lavasa, where the city itself is positioned as the attractor of economic activity. Where the corporate is state-owned, like the Bhilai and Bokaro steel plants or Kolar Gold Fields (Robertsonpet in Karnataka), or power plants like Singrauli and Ramagundam, the administrative and corporate features may meld into one another. The governance of these settlements as an industrial township is usually outside the representative framework, without elected government, as permitted in the proviso to Article 243Q of the Constitution.

### Subaltern Urbanisation

For subaltern urbanisation, a necessary characteristic is independence from the metropolis and a degree of autonomy. This does not preclude the presence of linkages among settlements. Settlements may also have a mix of autonomous and dependent (on a metropolis) urbanisation processes, varying over time. Based on the observed pattern of urbanisation, we try to characterise subaltern urbanisation on two axes, viz, spatial proximity and administrative recognition.

On the spatial proximity axis, we consider two types, viz, (1) peripheral, where the settlement is located in the periphery to the metropolis, and (2) non-peripheral, or all other settlements. On the administrative recognition axis, we posit the following four types of settlements, viz, (1) invisible, or not recognised as urban; (2) denied, or classified as a census town; (3) recognised, as a statutory town; and finally (4) contested, where the settlement is contesting its administrative status. The last can be of two subtypes; first, where the administrative classification is rural but the settlement wants to be recognised as urban and second, where the settlement wants to be rural but the administrative classification is urban. Conceptually,

on the administrative recognition axis, it can be thought of as lying between denied and recognised. Since the spatial proximity and administrative recognition axes are independent, this gives rise to multiple types of settlements, shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Classification Scheme for Subaltern Urbanisation**

| Spatial Proximity \ Administrative Recognition | Invisible | Denied | Contesting (I) | Contesting (II) | Recognised |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-peripheral | | | | | |
| Peripheral | | | | | |

Contesting (I) refers to a situation where the settlement wants to be urban but the administrative classification is rural, while the reverse situation is Contesting (II).

**(1) Peripheral Settlements:** Even when urbanisation occurs at the periphery of metropolises, it may not be dependent on them. While observationally, the spatial pattern is similar to that expected under the agglomeration hypothesis advanced under new economic geography, the underlying processes may be different and more autonomous in character, thereby justifying its classification as subaltern.

Consider Gurgaon, at the periphery of Delhi. The district population has grown by 5.7% annually over 2001-11, compared to 1.9% for Delhi. The municipality of Gurgaon itself has grown by 15.9% annually, partly due to the expansion of its boundaries. Although located at the border of Delhi, is Gurgaon's growth dependent on it?

It is hard to reject the hypothesis that the initial growth of Gurgaon may have been dependent on Delhi and on the state's investment in the Maruti automobile manufacturing facility. Furthermore, even initial private investment by developers such as DLF, positioning Gurgaon as a suburb of Delhi, was arguably due to regulatory restrictions on private developers, imposed consequent to the formation of Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

Today, however, Gurgaon's growth is driven by a mix of diverse activities. The modern services sector, located mostly to the north of the National Highway (NH-8) and the associated urbanisation is a creature of local entrepreneurship and (benign?) neglect by the state. Delhi's role is that of a supplier of educated labour. Growth has also been facilitated by the state-led development of a highway connecting Mumbai to Delhi, which runs through Gurgaon, and the expansion of Delhi Airport for the Commonwealth Games. To the south of the highway is the manufacturing section of Gurgaon, not dependent on Delhi's labour. It is anchored by the Maruti factory (now majority owned by Suzuki), but more diverse in scope than just automobile and auto ancillaries, and powered by numerous small and medium enterprises. Gurgaon is now expanding, incorporating the industrial township of Manesar, 20 km along the Mumbai highway. So, it is eminently possible that certain segments of Gurgaon's urbanisation processes may be autonomous and independent of Delhi. In part, this will depend on whether the investments in transportation infrastructure are viewed as spatially directed and how the labour linkages are seen.

It is not our contention that all peripheral urbanisation is subaltern in character. We provide this example to show that

(1) the extent to which settlements undergo subaltern urbanisation processes may change over time, and (2) all growth in the metropolitan periphery need not be dependent on it.

**(2) Non-Peripheral Settlements:** These are towns located outside the periphery of large towns.[15] While an "autonomous" growth engine is needed, the power of this engine may vary, e g, it is likely to be strong in towns, such as Miryalaguda, Bhiwandi and Aurangabad that have shown 10-fold growth over 50 years. However, there will also be other settlements which serve their region effectively, but without demonstrating such rapid growth. Harda and Gobindgarh are two possible examples of such towns.

Harda, located in the eponymous district of Harda in Madhya Pradesh, was established as a Nagarpalika by the British in May 1867. It is today a district headquarter, with rail links to Delhi and Mumbai, located on a national highway (NH 59-A, connecting Indore and Betul). But the town has remained relatively small, with a population of 14,015 households in 2011, an increase of 1.8% since 2001. Nevertheless, it appears to be an important mandi town (Krishnamurthy 2011: xx):

> [A] dynamic marketplace, constantly interacting with the changing contexts of agricultural production, regional political dynamics, technological developments, processes of reform, and the penetration and contraction of different forms of agro-commercial capital.

It has emerged as a (Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Limited 2011: 52) "centre of commercial activities… for wholesale and retail in…garment, grocery, hardware, auto-parts, medicine, jewelry (sic), etc, [for] people from surrounding areas (around 18 villages) and even from cities like Timarni, Seoni-Malwa".

Gobindgarh is a town in Fatehgarh Sahib district of Punjab. Kundu and Bhatia (2002) examine how it became a hub of steel rolling and linked industries, despite "not having any perceptible locational advantage" (p 50). Their explanation draws upon the history of entrepreneurship, fostered by proximity to Patiala, a well-developed network of middlemen and cost-effective informal financing arrangements and risk-sharing practices, even in the labour market. Despite this nodal position, however, the population of Gobindgarh (17,628 households in 2011, an increase of 3.9% over 2001) remains relatively small, though it has grown much faster (5.5% annually over 1961-2001) than Harda (2.7% per annum). The processes that sustain growth in such cities have been insufficiently explored. Small towns, which were earlier a locus of inquiry (e g, see Mathur 1982), now receive relatively little attention.[16]

**(3) Invisible Settlements:** Moving to the axis of administrative recognition, invisible settlements are large dense built-up settlements, classified as villages and are not seen as urban either by the administrative authorities or by the census. As noted by Denis and Marius-Gnanou (2011), over 10% of the national population may reside in them. An examination of the work profile of such villages in Bihar also shows that the proportion of male non-farm workers exceeds 50% in only a

few (a little over 10%) of them and is more than 75% (the census standard for classification as urban) in a negligible number. The question here is whether the census standard is a reasonable measure of "urban characteristics". As noted earlier, only five other countries use such criteria in defining urban settlements. Gupta (2010) in her work on villages around Bhopal finds that much smaller settlements like Harra Kheda can fulfil the role of an urban area, in terms of being a focal point for service provision. It could possibly have been recognised as a town by the census definition in 1951 as a "place with a smaller population [than 5,000] with definite urban character".[17] While satellite imagery has indicated the possible existence of dense settlements outside recognised urban areas, their growth processes remain to be studied.

**(4) Denied Settlements:** The next step along the administrative recognition axis is one where the settlement satisfies the threefold criteria used by the census but does not receive statutory recognition. The net number of such census towns increased by 2,532 over 2001-11 and more than half the increase was accounted for by Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

All census towns, however, may not be denied settlements. Some of them may have successfully contested classification as a statutory town, opting to remain a village. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Kerala and West Bengal, the two states with the largest number of census towns, should also be those with arguably the most empowered panchayats. It is possible that given the limited devolution of powers to the urban local bodies and the relatively large number of schemes focused on rural areas, it is more advantageous for a settlement to remain rural at least in some states.[18]

**(5) Contesting Settlements (I):** Settlements unhappy with their current classification, as noted earlier, are of two types. The first are settlements currently administratively classified as villages (which may include census towns) that want to become urban. Such instances can be observed in Tamil Nadu, where settlements, unlike in neighbouring Kerala, change from urban to rural and back to urban at the pleasure of the state government. On 11 June 2004, the Government of Tamil Nadu directed the "reclassification of 566 town panchayats as village panchayats".[19] The government determined that since (emphasis added):

> most of the town panchayats are financially weak, and *rural in character...*town panchayats having a population of less than 30,000 may be reclassified as village panchayats *so as to enable them to receive more funds from the Government of India and State Government under various grants and assistance.*

Of these settlements, 385 refused, stating that "(1) the present set up of administration is essential to attend to the public needs and (2) revenues from tax and other sources may decline". Regardless, it was decided to reclassify all these town panchayats as village panchayats. Thus, these settlements became instances of contesting settlements of the first type, villages contesting their classification and wanting to be towns.

**Contesting Settlements (II):** The ruling party changed in Tamil Nadu following assembly elections in May 2006. Soon after, on 14 July 2006, orders were issued to reconstitute the village panchayats in question as town panchayats.[20] In this case, 28 settlements passed resolutions stating that they wanted to remain classified as villages, but were nevertheless reconstituted as town panchayats, providing instances of second type of contestation, where settlements are classified as urban areas, though they want to be classified as villages.

Another, better publicised, instance of the second type is the expansion of the Vasai Virar Municipal Corporation, near Mumbai, on 3 July 2009. A number of villages incorporated into the municipal corporation resisted joining it (Ganesh 2009). Following this contestation, the Government of Maharashtra issued another notification on 31 May 2011, deleting 29 villages from the municipal corporation and adding two villages to its area. In its turn, the newly formed Vasai Virar Municipal Corporation challenged this notification in the Bombay High Court. Hearings are continuing, with the deletion of villages held in abeyance, i e, the 29 settlements remain classified as urban areas, though they want to be classified as villages.

Autonomy is thus not only related to the growth process; it is equally important in governance. The politics of urban classification remains an open area for research.

**(6) Recognised Settlements:** Recognised settlements are the final step on the administrative recognition axis. The non-peripheral towns of Harda and Gobindgarh described briefly earlier would be instances of such settlements.

## Process of Transformation

In the 1980s, the role of small towns in development and diffusion of urbanisation generated much interest. Rondinelli (1983) emphasised the functional role played by small urban centres in creating rural-urban linkages and contributing to an integrated and balanced network of places, a theme that Tacoli (2006) explores recently. The search was for balanced regional development in which small towns played the role of a transmission mechanism to rural areas. Rondinelli found that towns in India (1983: 386).

> frequently contain a wide array of small retail stores, personal and commercial services, and small cottage-processing, fabricating or simple manufacturing operations...economic activities found most frequently in Indian towns are weight and bulk-reducing processing operations such as sugar mills, sawmills, abattoirs, canneries, and oil-crushing mills. These localised activities in turn create demand for transportation and supply services as well as for storage, financial and insurance services.

While many such towns remain, others have become much more complex.

For two decades, the considerable body of research on global cities, global-city regions and large metropolises has hidden a large share of the urban population from view. But it is now necessary as Bell and Jayne (2009: 689) state, to:

> understand more fully the ways in which small cities attempt to develop competitive advantage in the global urban hierarchy, the

ways in which small cities link with other cities (and non-urban places) and the forms that these linkages take.

Urban settlements are part of city-systems, and this implies a need to look beyond rural-urban linkages and understand their dynamics as urban centres per se, in the context of their linkages with other cities, including international global cities. Our central hypothesis is that important forces of transformation are to be found in the agency of the actors located in these settlements, which goes beyond their role as a transmission mechanism for trickle-down growth.

The core question of interest is the manner in which process of subaltern urbanisation differ, if at all, from the processes seen in metropolises, e g, agglomeration-driven economies posited by theories of new economic geography. It is important to emphasise that this is not a question of the absence or presence of globalisation. Subaltern urbanisation can include settlements that may be connected not just locally and nationally, but also globally. The leather clusters of Ranipettai in Tamil Nadu or the knitwear-driven growth in Tiruppur are instances of global connections in non-peripheral locations. The question is whether the processes of transformation in these settlements are affected by our characteristics of spatial location and administrative recognition. Broadly, the drivers of this transformation, possibly intermingled and with feedback loops, can be grouped into three factors, viz, economic, social and political.

**Economic:** Various explanations could be related to the location and/or the relocation of economic activity in smaller urban centres or large villages. Ghani et al (2012) find that organised manufacturing appears to be growing relatively more in rural areas, while unorganised manufacturing is growing in urban areas. An explanation could be related to the improvements in connectivity offsetting the higher land cost in larger cities as well as exemptions on taxes in rural areas. The examples of Harda and Gobindgarh and the clusters around Salem and Vellore point towards agglomeration at a lower scale, with substantial exploitation of sociocultural networks. Ranipettai is a relatively small town of 11,659 households in 2011, but it is host not just to a large export-oriented leather cluster of small firms but also a fabrication industry (including a facility of ArcelorMittal Dhamm) and among the earliest sanitaryware plants (part of the Parryware brand) in India. What is the relationship between the small externally focused leather entrepreneurs and the large brand name firms? What are their respective spheres of autonomy and agency and how does it affect the process of urban development? Such questions highlight the nature of capital (including agricultural surplus),[21] whether external to the settlement or local, and its relationship to the extent of autonomy and the role of social, possibly caste-based, networks.

**Social:** A range of social changes is occurring across small towns. Krishnamurthy (2011) documents processes of moving to the town to avail education and health facilities, even as economic drivers stay broadly rural. In Dharuhera, one of the sites studied by one of the authors, preliminary fieldwork points towards a diverse set of strategies used by migrants. Migrants with family move to the town to benefit from better infrastructure facilities, while single male migrants move to peripheral villages. There may also be other, possibly less mundane and more momentous, social changes along the axes of caste and class occurring as a result of market forces.[22] Jeffery et al (2011) describe some of these changes in small towns of Uttar Pradesh, where they observe changing aspirations and lifestyles that impact education, housing and reproductive strategies. Such social factors affect preference structures and constraint sets, the degree of autonomy and capabilities, as social networks interact with capital accumulation and knowledge and access to markets beyond the settlement.

**Political:** The political changes that occur in a settlement with changes in its economic and social character are relatively poorly understood. It is also possible that political factors play a role in the process of transformation by conferring a heightened sense of agency on certain segments of the settlement's population. As seen previously, political factors also play a role in classifying a settlement as rural or urban. Typically, the nature of urban governance and the manner of implementation of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments have led to a situation in most states where urban local bodies are relatively more restricted than rural local bodies in terms of their autonomy, due to the influence of state development agencies and regulatory bodies.

In addition to the higher number of the union government schemes for panchayats, Bhagat (2005) mentions lower taxation, cheaper power and the absence of urban by-laws and regulations as incentives to remain rural. In contrast, once a settlement crosses a certain size, the provision of networked services, for which financial assistance can typically be accessed only by ULBs, may be seen as necessary. This can initiate interesting optimisation exercises, e g, between the freedom to develop land, which is easier in rural areas and the level of public services and consequent value of developed land, which is higher in urban areas. This balance will vary from one settlement to another and will mobilise different actors and interests. Many villages will oppose the move to become urban to preserve their lifestyles and arguably to avoid the type of land speculation prevalent especially in the periphery of metropolises. Other reasons for this resistance can be found in divergent political affiliations, an unexplored factor in potentially explaining forms of contestation. There may also be interactions with social factors, e g, Sengupta (2012) finds that religion is behind the resistance of some villages to being included in the Malegaon Municipal Corporation. While the city of Malegaon is largely populated by the Muslims, these villages are predominantly Hindu.[23]

The politics of classification we have just discussed implicitly take for granted that settlement boundaries are fixed. Situations where one part of the settlement is classified as rural and another part as urban further complicate the issue, as illustrated by two examples from preliminary fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh. In the small town of Daurala,[24] a large tract of

land occupied by an industrial unit was declared rural, thereby avoiding civic taxes. Consequently, there was a push by the ULB to incorporate this area into the settlement.

In a larger town, Sikandarabad,[25] the separation between the town and the village is only visible because of a water leakage on the road, which reflects the difference in the infrastructure standards. However, the most recent rural outgrowth of Sikandarabad is reportedly orchestrated by the village pradhan, who owns houses given on rent, a cinema and a marriage hall. To avoid taxes and maintain political power, he has built a coalition that resists the area's inclusion into the town.

## Field Studies

The use of large data sets, while important, is limited in understanding such transformation processes. Field observation is therefore essential to understand the role of various factors and their interrelationships in the study of subaltern urbanisation. It is necessary to conduct in-depth empirical research to distinguish between various forms of urbanisation and discern the extent and nature of autonomy in settlements. To assess the level of autonomy of SAs (whether peripheral or non-peripheral), one needs inter alia, to look carefully at the type and structure of capital and investments in these settlements, e g, the manner in which land is mobilised and agricultural surplus is used; study the structure of labour markets and the role of local actors in influencing and/or resisting policies.

In each of the categories we have defined, the specific processes that make the settlement as well the stakes around the governance question need to be uncovered. For instance, in the case of denied settlements, the stakes in not being classified and the potential of divergent interests for or against urban status (both at the local and at the state level) need to be interrogated. Similarly, without local inquiry, it would be impossible to assess the urban character of dense invisible settlements, whose urban character is currently cloaked in ambiguity. In order to understand the role of these settlements within the urban system, field studies need to go beyond the local story and recognise the rural-urban and urban-urban linkages and the relationships with various levels of government. This would reconnect with work on spatial and regional data sets that characterise their location and socio-economic context. Consequently, a sincere approach to understanding subaltern urbanisation requires a combination of field studies and analysis of spatial data and socio-economic data available through the census and National Sample Surveys (NSS), national and state accounts, etc. The interdisciplinary SUBURBIN project, which groups researchers from multiple institutions,[26] is currently engaged in this research agenda. Analysis of large-scale data, some of which has been explored to support our analysis here, is proceeding concomitantly with fieldwork in a number of sites. The current sites of inquiry of the project include Kullu and Shamsi in Himachal Pradesh, National Capital Region (NCR) towns like Dharuhera, Phulpur and Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh, Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh, Singur, Memari and Barjora in West Bengal, the Udupi region, the Salem region towns of Tiruchengode and Namakkal and the

leather cluster of Vellore, including the towns of Ranipettai, Melvisharam and Vaniyambadi in Tamil Nadu.[27]

## 3 Conclusions

The evolving evidence supports the claim of Ramachandran (1989: 187) that the "Indian urban system is indeed basically a system of diversified cities". These cities have a resilient and robust economic base, which may be connected globally, sometimes bypassing the intermediation of the metropolis. Unfortunately, there has been limited exploration of this diversity, but rather attempts to fit Indian cities into a broader global narrative, whether of global cities or new economic geography. However, as Markusen and Gwiasda (1993) have argued, even world cities differ depending on their domestic urban systems and many, as Markusen and Schrock (2006) show, are specialising away from advanced producer services.

To understand Indian cities and their economic trajectories, it is therefore useful to look again at the Indian urban system in its full richness. Given the lack of autonomy of city governments and the continuing political and economic salience of the state, this also involves engaging with the role of the cities within the state. This can be seen as part of what Robinson (2011: 13) calls an "analytically nimble and possibly experimental suite of comparative methods that are capable of responding to the array of urban experiences present in the world of cities".

There are other, very Indian reasons too for focusing away from the metropolis. Lanjouw and Murgai (2010) find that more than 80% of the urban poor live in small and medium towns. Furthermore, Himanshu et al (2010: 38) argue that:

> [R]ural non-farm diversification (and resultant rural poverty reduction), is found to occur more rapidly where there is consumption growth in neighbouring urban centres [and suggest] that the association is stronger if the urban centre is a small town than if it is a large city.

The deeper roots of the subaltern urban settlement mean that their growth not only helps the urban poor, but also the rural poor in the vicinity.

In the final analysis, the diversity and robustness of subaltern urbanisation shows the myriad ways in which Indian citizens take their destiny into their own hands, often subverting patterns dictated from above. We are seeing spatial patterns emerge that represent an adaptive creativity that does not follow the logic of any canonical model. India seems intent, as Nijman (2012: 18) puts it, on "writing its own script". It is an urbanisation with a distinct story, a "contribution made by the people *on their own*" (Guha 1982: 39), countering the claim of hegemonic narratives of space and identity. It incorporates ungoverned areas like census towns as well as unrecognised areas, that we call SAs. Instead of basing policy on illusions of control, we would do better to understand how agents make a world no state or theory could imagine. Understanding this is critical for comprehending the ongoing Indian transformation. Regardless of whether it will address theoretical and policy considerations, this alone would provide a firm rationale for focusing on what we call subaltern urbanisation.

NOTES

1 Nijman (2012:18) tempers his conclusion by saying that "we are only just beginning to understand Indian cities in their entirety, this amalgam of human modes of survival and adaptation, of diverse modes of production, historical continuities and ruptures, disparate urban fabric, complex geographies, and vernacular representations of modernity."

2 For an excellent discussion, see Mitra (1980).

3 Japan has a cut-off level of 50,000 but it uses other criteria in addition.

4 Efforts such as the e-Geopolis project attempt to apply a consistent measure across all countries; one of the authors of this paper is involved in that project. See http://www.e-geopolis.eu/

5 This exercise was done for settlements (towns and villages) above 2,000 in individual population; it excludes smaller settlements. Thus some SA populations may be underestimated.

6 See McGee (1991). This increase may reflect the colonial apprehension that such definitions may include "revenue units of a purely agrestic nature".

7 Only Bostwana, Japan, Lithuania, Sudan and Zambia use economic criteria, apart from India.

8 High-growth districts are those whose population growth rate is more than 1.65 times the standard deviation plus the mean, i e, the state population growth rate, assuming that the district population growth rates are normally distributed. In a state in which at least one outlier is obtained, districts with maximum and minimum population growth rate are removed and the above approach is reapplied to identify new outliers. If the second iteration generates new district(s),

then these are added to the existing outlier district(s) and classified as high growth districts. Implicitly, this method assumes and controls for state-specific factors that affect the population growth rate.

9 This is not due to the expansion of the municipal limits of Bangalore, since it relates to the population growth of the district as a whole. It is possible however, that the districts of the other cities, such as Hyderabad and Mumbai are smaller and more constrained in their ability to accommodate growth.

10 Available at e-Governance Standards portal: http://egovstandards.gov.in/Mapping_location_codes

11 This upper end is obtained if the estimated population of these settlements for 2011, obtained by applying the relevant state-specific population growth rate, is used.

12 The buffer is 10 km for a town of size 1,00,000 to 5,00,000, 15 km for towns of size 5,00,000 to one million, 20 km for towns between 1 and 4 million and 25 km for towns more than 4 million. This was done for 2,489 new census towns for which geocodes were available.

13 Of the 37 towns that became class I cities in 2011 and had no reported population in 1961, almost all (apart from a set of towns on NH-1 from Delhi to Chandigarh), are either planned towns like Gandhinagar and Navi Mumbai, or industrial towns like Bokaro Steel City and Rourkela, or situated on the peripheries of existing towns like Mango (Jamshedpur), Gurgaon (Delhi) or Madavaram (Chennai).

14 Nijman (2012:14) uses data from the United States Bureau of Labour Statistics, which is based on the Annual Survey of Industries, a survey limited in its scope claims that "India today is estimated to have some 10 million jobs

in manufacturing compared to 100 million in China". From the NSS 2009-10, the number employed in manufacturing is estimated to be 49 million workers, of which 26.7 million are in urban areas. In addition, there are 4.8 million workers in mining and utilities (2 million in urban areas) and 41.6 million construction workers (12.3 million in urban).

15 We recognise that growth in a non-peripheral location is not a sufficient condition for subaltern urbanisation. For example, growth may be driven by consumption of remittances from a distant metropolis.

16 Accounts like Kalpana Sharma's dispatches from Rajnandgaon, Janjgir, Narnaul, Jhunjhunu, Sehore, Madhubani and Mirzapur are rare: http://www.indiatogether.org/opinions/kalpana/

17 In the central place theory of Christaller (1966) and Lösch (1954), Harra Kheda may have been seen as a settlement at the bottom of a hierarchy of the city system.

18 In this context, it is important to note that case law on the subject in Kerala indicates that "there cannot be a transition of an urban area as a rural area". See AIR2005Ker319, 2006(1) KLT427.

19 Prior to this, according to Section 3-B of the Tamil Nadu District Municipalities Act, 1920, "any local area having a population of not less than 5,000 and an annual income of not less than 1 lakh of rupees shall be constituted as a town panchayat". This and subsequent quotations in this section are from Government of Tamil Nadu, GO No 270, 11 June 2004. Viewed on 11 July 2012: http://www.tn.gov.in/gorders/maws/maws-e-270-2004.htm

20 Government of Tamil Nadu, GO No 55, dated 14 July 2006. Viewed on 11 July 2012: http://www.tn.gov.in/gorders/maws/maws_e_55_2006.htm

21 Jeffery et al's (2011) work on the rich rural Jats of Uttar Pradesh point to the investing of agricultural surpluses in activities such as brick kilns. They further mention the selling of land to finance strategies such as children's education. In preliminary fieldwork conducted in the periphery of Delhi in Nuh, Hodal and Dharuhera by Marie – Hélène Zérah and Aditi Surie, similar processes have been identified.

22 See, for example, Kapur et al (2010).

23 See also the report on civic elections in Faizee (2012).

24 Field visit and interviews conducted on the 18 April 2011. Daurala has 3,434 households, according to the Census of 2011.

25 Field visit and interviews conducted on the 20 April 2011. Sikandrabad has 12,892 households according to the Census of 2011.

26 These are (in alphabetical order): the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi; Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi; Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research, Mumbai; Institut Français de Pondichéry, Puducherry; Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi and the University of Burdwan as well as independent researchers and PhD scholars. See also http://suburbin.hypotheses.org/

27 Researchers on these sites are: Diya Mehra in Kullu and Shamshi, Marie-Hélène Zérah, Aditi Surie and Anna Zimmer in the NCR, Rémi de Bercegol in Uttar Pradesh, Mythri Prasad in Pasighat, Gopa Samanta in West Bengal, Solly Benjamin in the Udipi region, Bhuvaneswari Raman and G Venkatasubramanian in Salem and Kamala Marius-Gnanou and Julien Bordagi in the Vellore region.

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