

Chapter 2

Rural, Urban, and Regional: Re-spatializing Capital and Politics in India

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2.1 Introduction

Rural-urban distinctions constitute a key aspect of social science theorizations of social order irrespective of the ideological or epistemological basis of conceptualizations. Theories of urban bias are as current and popular as are those which attribute persisting rural poverty to a range of structural factors, especially in countries of the global south. A review of studies on urban-rural interactions (Tacoli 1998) concludes that “populations and activities described either as ‘rural’ or ‘urban’ are more closely linked both across space and across sectors than is usually thought, and that distinctions are often arbitrary” (p. 160). Taking “development theory and practice” to task for ignoring rural-urban interactions, Tacoli (1998) argues that empirical evidence points to “linkages between urban centres and the countryside, including movement of people, goods, capital and other social transactions, [that] play an important role in processes of rural and urban change” (p. 147). Despite such cautionary statements, contemporary social science in or of India largely ignores rural-urban connections, networks, and linkages, often influencing policy positions, as well as those of social movements and civil society organizations. Both capital and politics deeply imbricate cities and villages with proximate and distant regions, even as these imbrications vary with time, social transformations, and economic changes. While historical factors, including British land settlements, infrastructure-influenced growth of production forces, and social reform, have shaped the dynamism, stagnation, or sluggishness of social formations and regions (Drèze and Sen 1997), their spatial implications for rural-urban and city-region

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linkages, as well as the spatiality of capital flow and political developments in India, have not been adequately studied or understood.

Capital flow-centered views of urban processes in Indian academic and political thought do not usually offer a nuanced understanding of how exactly capital flows and switches in capital circuits intersect with political and social dynamics in yielding specific urban structures.¹ One relatively neglected issue in urban studies in India has been the role of the politics of dominance and resistance, especially those centered on intra-rural conflicts (Cloke and Thrift 1987), in affecting urban processes and spatial practices. Caste-based/factional, intra-class, and other intra-rural conflicts cut across and involve both urban and rural areas, and influence political attitudes toward economic policies, global trade, and spatial planning. In explaining political support, especially at the provincial level in India for neoliberal economic policies, scholars often forget that political leaders contend with caste allies, competition with caste rivals, political rivalry in maintaining electoral dominance, and the need to sustain political power to maintain social and economic dominance at various levels of sociality and spatiality.² It is also to be noted that cities play a crucial role in mainstream national or regional political contestations and negotiations for diverse sorts of groups—class-based, ethnic, caste, religion or region, ideological, and political groups and factions. Despite the quite significant role that cities have played in India's nationalist movement and postcolonial emancipatory struggles, the political role of cities and its reciprocal impact on urban structures and spatial practices have rarely been studied in any great depth.³

For groups that wish to sustain or extend their dominant status in society, the city is an event that supports them in that process, even as the city can be an event for the oppressed and the marginalized in a way that assists them in their emancipatory struggles or struggles to resist domination. At the same time that rural groups seek to use the city in their mobility and power struggles, other groups already having a stake in the city may also seek to realize their visions of the city by exercising greater political control over urban planning and governance. The contestations, conflicts, and struggles between these create heterotopic spaces and compete with capital flows in defining and redefining urban forms and processes. The morphology of cities, the forms of urbanism one observes, the urban planning, or the lack of it—all these are affected by rural-urban connections and transitions.

Dominant castes in villages who have now become rural elites and lower-caste oppressed groups both look for greater agency with the advent of democratization processes to extend and sustain domination or to resist it. The reference here is to social and political, as well as economic domination and exploitation, which may have little to do with or only indirectly related to the capitalist economy. Especially provincial/hinterland cities and smaller towns, but also capital cities of states in India, and, increasingly, metropolitan cities such as Bombay/Mumbai, Hyderabad,

¹ See, for instance, Banerjee-Guha (2010).

² For a focused discussion on this and other references, see Parthasarathy (2011b).

³ The substantial body of work by Jim Masselos on Bombay/Mumbai is an important exception.

or Bangalore are being drawn into these social and political struggles; this is happening because acquiring cityhood enables access to urban institutions—the city becomes a stake in these struggles, but also provides agency. The city provides agency by first providing access to resources, power, and institutions located there—these could be institutions pertaining to the judiciary and bureaucracy, which, despite corruption, work in less arbitrary ways; the city provides access to political parties and leaders willing to take up their causes. The city enables networking and scaling up of smaller social and political movements. The city provides access to the media and gives greater political visibility. For the dominant castes in the rural areas, in the face of a crumbling rural economy and increasing difficulties in extracting surplus using feudal forms of exploitation, the control of the city and access to wider political power and administrative mechanisms are important to fund or subsidize new economic activities both in rural areas and in cities. For the *dalits*, the lower castes, and the rural poor in general, the city is not just a place which offers an alternate livelihood but also a space where they can realize their utopias, a place where they can hope to lose their identities in the anonymity of the crowd, a place where they can hope that achievement will be valued more than ascription, but above all, spaces of justice and empowerment, where they can conceive of and deploy a politics of resistance using diverse political strategies.⁴ Even as these are being increasingly recognized in the context of identity-based, regional, “nativist” movements, the regional dimension of politics and capital flows that undergirds conflicts between temporally segregated, historically determined linkages between specific cities and regions remains unanalyzed.

Economies at different stages of capitalist development and with different rural-urban demographics will have quite different class fractions and class divides. In order to understand the multiple ways in which globalization and local economic imperatives shape spatial reorganization and land use and in order to comprehend the arenas where conflicts and competition for space take place, it is essential that we first acquire a broader and more grounded understanding of how ordinary people make use of space in their struggles to make a living, and for social emancipation and political empowerment, as well as for sustaining and extending social and economic domination. We need an understanding of the “local life of global forces” (Coombe 2001, p. 298) by focusing on the unique ways in which space is reorganized by forces of globalization in collaboration with local actors, in consonance with rural-urban transitions, in turn, restructuring physical space, built environment, and land use in new ways. This entails a different conceptualization of the city itself—the city has much more of the “rural” and the “regional” in it than is usually given credit for.

In distinguishing between the rural and urban, scholars like Ashish Nandy (2001) tend to place too much emphasis on the idea of the city as an organized space, on the “formal” aspects of the city, on its institutional base, on the high level

⁴ Moon (2002) offers an autobiographical account of this process. The chapter by Chairat in this book works out the implications of a political, mobilized, rural underclass for urban and national politics.

of individualism and anomie, and on the non-innocence of the city which is seen to be tainted, sullied, and corrupted. My own research brings out not only the high level of informality which disrupts organization and formality but also the various ways in which forms of communitarianism, as well as ethnic togetherness and bonds, struggle to efface individualism in the city. One also finds that far from the city being the opposite of the village, the city itself is subjected to rural influences, i.e., it is ruralized, and the rural in the city does not abjectly succumb to structural and psychological domination. The rural transforms the city, and far from being an outcome of instrumental rationality, the city is not just made by capital and the state, but also made and remade by those who migrate there. The rural migrants do not go back defeated to the village like the cinematic Bengali effeminate heroes whose examples are the basis for Nandy's arguments; rather they locate themselves simultaneously in the rural and the urban, make use of global flows, are sometimes buffeted by these and by rural-urban crosscurrents, but still retain a vision of the city as an utopian place, even as the city itself remains a heterotopic space—a site which can be used as a space of struggle to achieve utopias; a social space which makes the realization of utopias possible, where, despite individualizing and objectifying tendencies, it is possible to generate a critical mass necessary to launch struggles over livelihoods, extraction of surplus, identity, resistance, and emancipation.

Conflicts over regional, religious, and ethnic identities, political struggles and emancipatory movements, class struggles, and struggles over livelihoods play out in urban space, but they also question the “grand narratives” regarding the temporalization of space (Massey 1999). By pointing to the “unnerving multiplicity” (Massey 1992, p. 67) of space in time, the stories of conflicts and struggles in Indian cities stress a line of reasoning wherein one could analyze rural-urban and urban-regional linkages and global flows concomitantly.

This chapter seeks to interpret the post-1980s political and economic changes in India using a spatial lens. The debate over India's economic liberalization has dwarfed significant social transformations and political changes since the late 1970s/early 1980s, wherein non-Brahmin upper castes and other backward class (OBC) castes have risen to power in several Indian states, irrevocably altering the political landscape of symbols, language, styles of mobilization, and alignments. These changes have, in turn, created new urban-rural and urban-regional networks and connections or reinforced older ones. This chapter attempts to reinterpret and reconfigure notions of rural, urban, and region in light of these political trends with a special focus on the three states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. These states have also been at the center of new urban dynamics caused in part, by the global linkages fostered by economic and spatial switches in their urban centers (primarily Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad, but also other smaller cities and towns). Compared to north Indian states, they have also had a much longer history of anti-caste social reforms and non-Brahmin movements. While the rising political and economic aspirations of “regional” or rural elites have been recognized to have played a role in the regionally differentiated growth patterns of the post-liberalization period, the spatial implications in terms of domestic capital flows, their specific

iterations in space, and redrawing of the relationship between rural and urban areas and their diverse regional linkages have not been adequately researched. The inter-connections between agrarian capital and global finance and their geographical effects are also not well understood.

Studies of the “region” in India have been almost exclusively the domain of geographers and demographers with a few spatially inclined economists also contributing. Such studies have, however, concentrated on a few narrowly defined problems such as regional (under)development or regional imbalances, adducing resource constraints, climate/weather, infrastructure, and demographic factors in their arguments and explanations. Significant early work in the immediate aftermath of independence notwithstanding, the role of class relations, emergence of entrepreneurial classes, intra- and inter-class conflicts, issues of power, governance, and devolution, rates of primitive accumulation, and trajectories of domestic capital flows—these rarely find mention in analysis of regional patterns of economic growth and change. This has meant that issues of regionalism and regional conflicts are also not located in their proper social, economic, and political contexts; the regional dimensions of urban politics and spatialized conflicts are not comprehended; and the politico-economic dimensions of state capture and governmentality involving specifically delineated regional groups are not recognized.

In the field of politics, regardless of a veritable industry spawned by the relative success and sustenance of the “world’s largest democracy,” and the attention paid to identity politics, studies have tended to accept, uncritically, state-created geographic boundaries rather than other forms of regions and boundedness enabled by the movement of people, goods and services, ideologies, and capital. This is despite the very obvious boundedness of classes, as well as caste and other identity-based groups, and the new regional linkages formed by the movement and spatial spread of sociality and power of these groups. Postmodern critiques of Western-style democracy and governance institutions have not been taken seriously, in part owing to the absence of a sound empirical basis for such critiques. The evolving social and power structures in India, its transforming demography, and collision, cooperation, and competition between sections of domestic and foreign capital all affect political alignments and activity in cities and at regional levels in diverse ways.

This chapter attempts to offer some insights into the different ways in which both politics and capital are being re-spatialized in the Indian context. While this chapter is based on primary research and secondary material, the attempt is less to draw firm conclusions and more to propose ideas for analysis and interpretation, suggesting an agenda for future research.

2.2 Capital Cities, Regions, and Spatiality of Politics

Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru—the capital cities of the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, respectively, have, from time to time, experienced nativist movements targeting migrants from other regions of the state or

country.⁵ These migrants are seen as exercising economic, political, or cultural domination in these cities or are charged with taking away jobs from “locals”. A number of factors have been identified by scholars and observers seeking to explain these movements, and indeed, several of these explanations seem to fit. As these movements ebb and flow through different historical phases, diverse factors are seen to be coming into play. The aim here is not so much to add to or explicate further on these causes, but to reflect on the insights one may obtain regarding rural-urban and urban-regional linkages from a reading of these movements. Such an exercise even makes us raise questions regarding the social significance of distinctions between urban and rural and brings into play diverse notions of region in attempting to answer those questions. The spatial expansion of political support for regionally specific parties across regions and from villages to cities, the nature of political activities in cities, and the political empowerment engendered by the multiple location of social and political actors all alert us to certain unique consequences of the post-1980s social transformation in India that includes economic liberalization and the political rise of intermediate *bahujan* castes.⁶

Among the several issues/questions that arise in studying these nativist and regional movements, some stand out. What is the role of capital cities in facilitating these movements? Indeed, why are anti-migrant sentiments greater in capital cities than in other cities which may in fact have greater migrant inflows owing to a more dynamic labor market? Is there a relationship to proportion of migrant population and type/nature/control of economic activity? What political dynamic explains the spatial and temporal spread of these movements and events? While it is not possible to address all such questions, some intriguing ones deserve special mention. The “region” from which migrants come into the cities and regions in question are different in each case. Mumbai’s history of in-migration goes back several centuries, but the north Indian rural migrants, who are the current target of local chauvinist parties, have a history of migration that is around 150 years old. Escaping British persecution after the 1857 revolt, lured into the then Bombay city and province by promises of employment in the booming textile industry in the first half of the twentieth century, and fleeing poverty, caste, and religious persecution, migrants from the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar constitute a significant proportion of the population of Mumbai and its satellite towns. They are also politically active and influential. British rulers seeking to develop the city as their chief commercial center also attracted business communities from Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Kolkata, and the city’s own cosmopolitanism, its reputation for a work culture, and the presence of financial institutions attracted business castes and families to settle and invest in the city.

Migration from the coastal Konkan region of the state, with which the city is contiguous, has been more problematic. Initially resisting British overtures to migrate and find employment in the city’s factories during colonial rule (Morris 1960),

⁵ Weiner (1978) is a dated but comprehensive overview on this.

⁶ On the latter, see Jaffrelot (2003).

subsequently brought to the city through threats and the use of force, and later finding employment owing to their higher education levels, the Konkan migrants constitute a significant force in Mumbai's middle class, its white collar workforce, and in terms of political influence. Migrants from the resource-scarce and arid western Maharashtra, on the other hand, also co-dominate the city's political scene by virtue of acquiring political and economic clout using electoral politics and the power of the state to shore up its economic fortunes. The other two regions of the state—Vidarbha and Marathwada—have had a different history, which has resulted in tenuous links with the rest of the state for a long period, and these regions continue to exercise little influence in the city's politics and economics.

Hyderabad has for several decades been the base of a movement for statehood for Telangana—the region in which it is located and which, together with contiguous regions in the neighboring states of Maharashtra and Karnataka, constituted the princely state of Hyderabad ruled by the *Asaf Jahi* dynasty until 1948.⁷ Not being under direct colonial rule, it had a more feudal past and, hence, was ripe for domination by the rich peasant political elite of the more dynamic coastal Andhra region. Since the early 1980s, with the advent of the Telugu Desam Party, Hyderabad has been dominated by the *Kamma* peasant entrepreneurs of coastal Andhra, who have also transformed the city's spaces, culture, and built environment by colonizing large parts of it. The rich *Kamma* peasants of coastal Andhra historically had class and caste alliances with their counterparts in the city of Madras (since the region was part of the Madras Presidency) until independence from colonial rule and electoral democracy substantially reduced their political power in a state in which they were a minority. The movement for a united Andhra Pradesh in the 1950s was significant for the formation of linguistic states in India, but its origins lie significantly, even if partly, in the imperative need of coastal Andhra elites to wield power independently in a state of their own. The linguistic/chauvinist turn of Dravidian/Tamil politics also meant that coastal Andhra Telugus could do little to enhance their political influence. Regional linkages of elites thus changed in response to geopolitical reorganization of electoral/democratic constituencies. The domination of coastal Andhra elites over Hyderabad was preceded by intense, if not always successful, efforts to dominate over the Telangana region itself, a process which could and has been more successfully implemented by obtaining hegemony and control over state politics and Hyderabad city. While Hyderabad has a significant Muslim population and is one of India's most cosmopolitan cities after Mumbai, Muslims have had a more ambivalent attitude to the demand for Telangana statehood. The movement itself has been fairly clear about its opposition to domination by coastal Andhra. While the resistance is largely against political, economic, and cultural domination, working- and middle-class migrants from coastal Andhra into Hyderabad have also borne the brunt of attacks.

The reorganization of states on a linguistic basis has created some incongruities and contentious issues among which have been the choice of capital cities for these

⁷ An excellent overview of urban development and planning issues in Hyderabad against a historical backdrop is provided in Naidu (1990).

states—location has been only one of the deciding factors. Bengaluru is located on the eastern border of the state of Karnataka, its suburbs and industrial estates in fact being located in the state of Tamil Nadu. The emergence of the city as an important hub for global software outsourcing, the location of a significant section of this sector in the city's Tamil Nadu industrial clusters and the inflow of Tamil skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor have played a key role in the emergence of anti-Tamil, pro-Kannada movements in the city, even though the anti-immigrant sentiments are not as strong as in Hyderabad or Mumbai. Even as the city has become an important node in global software outsourcing, the city itself has become subjected to increasing domination by rural magnates with a base in minerals and plantations, as well as by a landed rentier/political class with interests in real estate. Devolution and democratic reforms, accompanied by the rise of backward castes, have also created new political parties, factions, and power centers, all of which have brought in a new class of leaders who have established their base in Bengaluru and expanded their political and economic footprints in the city. In taking on the established political class, officialdom, and economic interests, these leaders and factions have also found it useful to stir pro-Kannada sentiments in their rise to and maintenance of political power.

It is against this background of economic liberalization, globalization, and reconfiguration of power structures that one must reexamine and redefine the spatiality of politics and capital to reconceptualize notions of urban, rural, regional, and their linkages. What is similar in all three cases is that while the history of nativist movements and anti-immigrant sentiments may diverge and the nature of such sentiments has been both regressive and progressive, the current resurgence has to be viewed in the context of an expansion of opportunities fueled by global linkages and economic output growth, even as opportunity structures themselves have not changed much. The sentiments and attitudes toward regionalism and migration, it is contended here, are not so much a result of absolute deprivation as of relative deprivation; expansion of a built environment for consumption and rapid growth of a middle class with a huge consumable surplus—a substantial constituent of which are immigrants—has been politicized by parties competing for votes in a multi-party electoral system that itself is being transformed by a re-spatialization of politics. There is also a difference. Mumbai's targeted immigrants are poorer and from rural backgrounds, the target of the Telangana movement is more the rural and small town elite, while Bengaluru's is a more ambiguous Tamil population identified linguistically rather than in terms of regional (urban-rural) origin. This difference, however, belies the significance the rural dimension has for (re)linking regions to cities, for explaining the ways in which the rural has implications for the spatiality of politics across regions and in cities.

Intra-rural, intra-class conflict is an important dimension that is not often recognized by scholars. Rural elites share an association at the regional level united by alliances of caste, kinship, and political interests. Political ascendancy and power are easier to attain by forming alliances at the regional level including alliances across classes and castes. Such alliances are also imperative because of the ways in which constituencies are delineated. The ascendancy of elites from one region to power at the state or provincial level, therefore, requires that they compete or

clash with elites from other regions. This happens as part of a “deal,” a nonessential economic-corporate compromise (in Gramscian terms) with nonelites of their own region. This compromise requires coming to power in the state capital and diverting state finances away from other regions toward one’s own region. Rural elites in all three states have followed this strategy, leading to intra-class, inter-regional conflicts, but also leading rural elites to clash with urban elites who wish to divert state finances for facilitating higher returns to their capital investments. Rural as well as urban elites also collude or work separately to exploit weaker or less powerful regions to meet their own consumption and investment needs, especially through infrastructure projects which divert local resources for distant regions.

The region-rural-urban connections are also reflected in political configurations and activities within provincial capital cities themselves. Regional political parties which have a base in particular states, such as the Samajwadi Party or Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh (UP), gain an active presence in cities like Mumbai owing to the large presence of UP migrants in the city. Migrants from north India continue to have kinship and economic linkages with their native regions, and the presence of “multi-spatial households” (Tacoli 1998) puts pressure on UP-based political parties to respond to attacks on UP migrants in Mumbai or even to just address their demands in the city, which helps them politically in their home state. Conversely, issues that affect migrants from states like UP and Bihar in Mumbai have a repercussion in their own states, become political issues, and affect party and electoral politics both in the city and in the regions. Multi-spatial households translate into multi-spatial communities and political societies and facilitate the expansion of regional parties into other areas and regions to become multi-spatial political parties. In Bengaluru as well, regional political parties from Tamil Nadu have gained a foothold in pockets of the city, especially post attacks on Tamils in the past few years. Multi-spatial households and communities also affect everyday politics and power relations at the point of migration.

Several ongoing studies reveal that whatever the initial push factor for migration, poorer, lower-caste migrants find in migration a way of escaping caste-based dependency relations; it strengthens their bargaining or negotiating power with employers, exposes them to new opportunities for acquiring skills, and opens up avenues for social mobility. This spatial aspect of migration-related power relations is often not recognized even by sympathetic scholars and critics who tend to view migration in largely negative terms. As migration routes get strengthened and expand in size, it creates new opportunities for investments and financial flows, especially in the transportation sector, and also in related real estate developments in which both rural elites and labor participate and benefit. In extreme cases, migration is seen to even result in labor shortages, forcing landed classes to also migrate to cities after disposing off their assets and bringing in capital investments.⁸

⁸ These insights are based on evidence being generated as part of ongoing doctoral research work carried out by Valentine Gandhi, R. Padmaja, Sutapa Ghosh, and Binti Singh. I wish to thank them for sharing these ideas.

To return to the theme of the spatiality of political connections, it is seen that regionally specific associations loosely affiliated to political parties or floated by parties themselves emerge as seen in cities like Mumbai. Outfits representing *Uttar Bhartiya*s (north Indians), or people from the Konkan region of Maharashtra, sprout and not only mobilize the electorate for votes but also organize periodic cultural, sports, political, and religious events as a way of cultivating a regional vote bank in the city. Both national and regional or city-specific parties in Mumbai also join this game, thus splitting the city's population further along regional lines in addition to extant caste and religious groupings. The practice of ruling and opposition parties having "guardian" ministers or leaders for specific regions and electoral constituencies also adds to this process. Demands from locals in regions and constituencies and the need to cultivate such constituencies result in regional- or constituency-specific associations being formed autonomously or set up by leaders and parties in the city. As mentioned earlier, this process is enabled by the presence of multi-spatial households and communities and facilitates the formation of multi-spatial electoral and political communities which link cities to specific regions of diverse kinds and sizes. The situation in cities like Hyderabad is somewhat similar but also different. Political parties having their origin and economic/sociocultural base in other regions of the state, such as the Telugu Desam Party or the recently floated Praja Rajyam Party, find it easier to enter Hyderabad politics due to the presence of migrants from the region in the city, though this is not the only factor. Localities with predominantly migrants from coastal Andhra form associations that fight for their specific interests and maintain links with their region's leaders. More importantly, even as local political representatives at various levels may hail from the Hyderabad region itself, they begin to be increasingly funded and patronized by rich coastal Andhra elites. Local leaders trying to escape from this situation or local elites unable to pursue their own interests both then begin to fuel anti-immigrant and pro-autonomy demands and movements.

Thus, in studying various ethnic and religious conflicts in cities, we need to recognize that as individuals and households linked by caste, religion, regional origin, language, or ideology use political strategies and support different political parties in their struggles for social mobility and empowerment, the cultural movements and struggles also translate into political conflicts which express themselves in conflicts over space. It is important to understand here that political and religious imbrications are linked to rural-urban and regional flows, transitions, and networks, and to caste and regional conflicts implicated in these transitions and connections, not just to capital flows, or to being merely the consequences of government action or inaction on urban and spatial planning. Whether or not one grants the status of global city to Mumbai, Bangalore, or Hyderabad, it needs to be recognized that these cities are being transformed by forces that are not just restricted to global linkages and global economic crises. These other forces also alter the built environment and spatial practices in cities in different ways.

A key example is the celebration of religious festivals in cities. There is a significant rural, agrarian, or regional dimension in the revival or introduction of public celebration of Hindu religious festivals in India, and it would be wrong to

attribute this purely to Hindu revivalism or Hindu fundamentalism. Mumbai is the most cosmopolitan city in India, perhaps its “only city,” with over 50% of the population hailing from other Indian states. Hence, over several decades, groups from other states have gradually introduced public and community celebrations of cultural and religious events and festivals into the city, with important implications for space use during festive seasons; these have emerged as a significant source of conflict between activists of chauvinist and nativist political parties and “outsiders” (Patel 1996). Until a decade ago, the major public celebration of a religious festival in India was the *Ganesh* festival, which lasted for 10 days during the August–September period. Migration from outside the state has gradually introduced the *Navratri*—celebrated publicly by the *Gujaratis* as *Dandia*, with public song and dance events, and by the *Bengalis* as *Durga Puja*—usually occurring in October. The extensive use of public space—streets and lanes being completely blocked for extended periods during these festivals—has brought with it several consequences aside from inconvenience to users of roads. Competitive use of public space soon emerges as members of different political parties, local factions, youth groups, castes, and religions begin to celebrate these festivals separately, as well as begin celebration of other events hitherto not celebrated publicly. These have included regionally specific cultural/religious festivals, as well as birth anniversaries of political leaders.

This is evident in the *Chhat Puja*—originally a rural festival from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh which has suddenly become popular over the last few years in Mumbai. While practiced in an isolated way by individuals and families earlier, it has now become a community event occupying large spaces in and around Mumbai’s Juhu beach, notwithstanding the impurity of the sea as opposed to the ritual purity of the river for Hindus. The scale of the celebration and the public patronage and support for the *Chhat Puja* by Mumbai politicians of north Indian origin leave little doubt that the festival’s sudden popularity and public observance are aimed as a counter to the very public violence against north Indians in Mumbai by activists of nativist political parties. Persisting rural-urban and regional linkages and their political ramifications quite clearly imbricate uses of public space in this case also. There is also a class/caste and rural dimension to this public celebration. The nativist movement against north Indians does not target professional middle-class migrants but the lower-class migrants living in slums and blighted areas. That the “urbanized” classes have not been targeted, that they do not celebrate their festivals in public, and that lower-class/caste migrants from rural north India occupy public spaces in their celebrations—these are indicative of class/caste origins as much as they reflect the nature of the city’s politics. Over the last few years, the north Indian lower-class migrants have started occupying public spaces for more and more festivals which are traditionally celebrated in public spaces in rural north India, but which are confined to homes by upper-class migrants (*Pitru Paksha*, *Mauni Amavasya*, *Karva Chauth*).

Culture, religion, and politics by no means exhaust the explanations for comprehending urban-rural and urban-regional linkages and connections. These work in consonance with and are influenced by economic and material factors, particularly

related to the accumulation and flow of capital. These factors, however, need to be explained in ways that are more nuanced than those offered by Marxist/neo-Marxist or liberal/neoliberal approaches, especially as capital accumulation and flows are seen to be linked to spatial practices and urban processes in ways that do not lend themselves to simplistic interpretations.

2.3 Rural-Urban and Urban-Regional Linkages: Realigning Population, Power, and Capital

The foregoing description reinforces academic work that analyzes population movements in terms of their significance for power relations and power structures. Unlike critiques of neoliberalism, which valorize global flows of capital and their implications to the relative neglect of domestic forces,⁹ the perspective outlined here enables us to develop a multipronged approach for better appreciating class, capital, and politics, and their spatial manifestations and implications in Asian contexts. To begin with, one might seek reasons to explain the relatively greater linkages and integration of cities like Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru compared to cities like Kolkata or other tier 2 cities in India, which have historically been integrated into global production, trade, and financial circuits, but have not had the same types and rates of growth as these three cities in recent times. Why and how do some cities gain entry into or fall out of global economic networks? Why did these cities, and not others, gain from the global outsourcing of software and information technology? Do local or regional factors influence which cities are “ripe” to enter global economic networks? Raising such questions makes us aware of the limitations of approaches such as the inter-urban competition argument of Harvey (1989) in explaining the shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in urban governance. Studying regional/nativist movements in these three cities, by locating them within rural-urban and urban-regional networks and tracing their emergence as nodes in global financial circuits, provides us with an alternate perspective on urban governance and urban dynamics.

This alternate perspective assumes that certain preconditions are necessary for cities to be allowed to enter global circuits and benefit in diverse ways from integration. In the Indian context, while inter-urban competition is no doubt present, a long-term view of the growth or decline of the economic role of cities indicates the key function that classes with a specific interest in urban areas perform. While Mumbai has been linked to global financial and trading circuits for a much longer time compared to Hyderabad and Bengaluru, recent “entrepreneurialism” in urban governance also has to be explained in terms of classes which stand to benefit from global integration and so have an interest in urban governance reforms. In all three

⁹ The work of Nijman (2000a) on Mumbai constitutes an exception, especially as he insists on factoring national political economies into the analysis of globalization and urban processes.

cases, the post-1990s urban governance and growth dynamics have to be seen from the perspective of rural elites who need control of the capital city not only for political domination but also to re-spatialize their economic interests by plugging into global financial circuits. At the same time, the protection of their economic interests in real estate, infrastructure, and resource-based sectors and the protection of the political bases require that they do not support a complete shift to entrepreneurialism and that they do not go all the way with purely urban (industrial) capital which may or may not have links with global capital. Rural elites from coastal Andhra, from western Maharashtra, and from different parts of Karnataka, who all may be said to compose provincial capital, play this role, whereas a city like Kolkata historically does not have this provincial capital.¹⁰ Thus, the flight of capital and businesses from Kolkata to Mumbai and other cities is not just a result of three decades of communist rule, as is commonly presumed, but also in fact predates this by several decades.

Why, however, could this provincial capital not develop cities in their own habitats and regions of dominance and hegemony? Why did they move and take control of state capitals often outside their regions, for which they have had to overcome problems of regional linkages and networks? One answer lies in the nature of governance in India, where state agencies with the power to make decisions on contracts, permits, and licenses are located in state capitals and, hence, proximity to decision-making authorities is required. Another lies in the long history of lack of education among the rural elites, which ensures that they have little knowledge of the workings of the modern economy, its institutions, and rules of engagement and, hence, have to depend on bureaucrats (and retired bureaucrats) to work their way through the system. A third aspect which requires further study is that cosmopolitanism is perhaps present in these cities to a larger extent than many other cities in India. Provincialism maintains rural elites' dominance and hegemony, keeps down rivals and subjects, but cannot provide an enabling environment for capital accumulation,¹¹ especially as firm sizes increase, and hence, management has become more complicated, technological advances have become essential, and human resources need to be managed in a non-feudal style. It is not just in these three states but also in the flight of capital from Kolkata starting from the early decades of the twentieth century, and especially in the shift of the film and advertising industry to Mumbai, in which this is exemplified. This cosmopolitanism has arisen due to a complex mix of British rule, transformation of the opportunity structure, global economic and cultural linkages, and unique demographic blend and has in fact managed to survive the provincial onslaught even if it is itself under constant threat.

This cosmopolitanism forms at least one reason for poorer migrants to come into the city, in anticipation of greater mobility via a more flexible opportunity structure.

¹⁰ I wish to thank Ananya Roy for this insight on Kolkata.

¹¹ Parthasarathy (1997) offers a discussion on this with reference to the provincial elite of coastal Andhra.

Mumbai traditionally has had more migrants from outside the state than any other city in India. This creates another circuit for capital flows, another route to capital accumulation, a subterranean form of capital, which is, as yet, not adequately studied. Rural poor migrants to the city are recognized as contributing to the labor force and to the informal sector, but their role in facilitating capital flows and capital accumulation is not as well-known or recognized. While remittance flows between members of multi-spatial households are well documented, what is not is that a significant proportion of households, despite their low levels of income, are able to save and invest in assets both in the city and in the native village. More noteworthy is the gradual upward mobility of migrants in the city, who use newly acquired skills and suppliers' credit to set up small businesses in the city and then act as conduits for distribution and sales in their native regions. From fast-moving consumer goods to durables, from small tools and machinery to drugs and pharmaceuticals, a steady stream of branded and counterfeit goods move and create new subterranean financial circuits between Mumbai and regions within the state and in distant states in north India. Recent media reports of "Bihar's growth story" raving about a booming economy are not just about substantially improved governance and flow of remittances but also to do with increased financial and trade linkages between cities like Mumbai and rural areas in the state.

Cities like Mumbai and Delhi are enmeshed in complex networks with rural hinterlands involving flows of people, capital, culture, ideas, and power. This is also reflected in the rise of Bhojpuri cinema, which clearly shows that the Hindi heartland is not the marginalized or subaltern "other" of Mumbai, but that in fact, Bhojpuri cinema would be impossible without Mumbai and Bollywood (Parthasarathy 2011a). Bhojpuri-speaking people have had exposure and links to Bollywood through migration and an active presence in Bombay's economy. Especially with respect to filmmaking, Bhojpuris, unlike others from the north Indian heartland, have cultural and social capital when it comes to film production. City-region linkages can also be observed in the very large, semiformal, small, and tiny manufacturing sector in Mumbai. Manufacturing everything from cosmetics to leather wear, garments, home electronics, and processed food, these start as street vending or home-based enterprises, and as they expand, they link to supply chains in their native villages or outsource to producers back in their native regions.¹² The scale of this rural-urban petty capital connection is quite large and its effects in rural regions significant, even if somewhat dispersed. Making use of caste, kinship, and village networks, these activities create new regional and rural-urban networks linking small-scale, semiformal, and informal producers and traders, extending and expanding migrant networks into fiduciary networks, spatializing capital in new ways.

At the other end, and going back to the issue of provincial capital, economic liberalization, deregulation, and political change since the 1980s have introduced another dimension to regional-urban linkages, in terms of delineating new regions.

¹²I wish to thank Deepmala Baghel whose ongoing research has contributed to this insight.

Resource-based sectors (minerals, agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, wind energy, plantations) have been opened up to foreign direct investment and private participation. As more rural-landed classes and politicians enter this sector, these and older elites already in this sector seek to expand, modernize, and establish national/international linkages for their businesses. Both within existing states and across states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, regions come to be defined by the resource base, by licenses for exploration and mining being opened up, and by the integration of agri-horticulture and plantations with processing industries set up in close proximity. New alliances begin to be formed, cutting across political parties and factions as common interests create new regional interests that seek to undermine existing political and governance arrangements, as seen in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in recent times. Politically, these interests seek to control and dominate capital cities so necessary for super profits, for obtaining licenses and clearances, and for entering into strategic alliances with foreign partners. Likewise, as rural elites penetrate the infrastructure sector that has also been opened up for private participation, regulations and institutional mechanisms are tweaked to ensure that landed elites and rentier classes are awarded major contracts, further necessitating and strengthening their dominance over capital cities and creating new spatialities of capital between and across cities and regions, facilitated by the state. Investments in urban real estate further consolidate their economic and political power, and in Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru, the traces of rural elites are clearly evident while tracking urban expansion. As the chapter by Maringanti illustrates, we need to perceive rural-urban interactions in India “against a backdrop of popular democracy in which a range of caste alliances are always at work.”

Quite apart from the implications of global outsourcing, foreign direct investments, and neoliberal governance, these cities are also then important nodes in the new spatial flows of capital, which is also simultaneously linked to political expansion of diverse rural sections. These spatial flows realign the rural to the urban, regions to cities, and global to regions, they redefine regions and politically empower or disempower populations in cities, villages, and regions. This chapter has presented a descriptive account of rural-urban and regional networks and linkages in order to map the continuing and emerging ways in which capital and politics are spatialized in India. Rural-urban connections are more than just about demographic aspects of migration, just as the concept of region is dynamic and has multiple dimensions. It is perhaps, as yet, too early to theorize these developments. The descriptions and arguments above, however, help us avoid the pitfalls inherent in blindly adopting theories and concepts derived from American or European contexts to other situations (Nijman 2000b). Tirtosudarmo’s historical survey of the spatial expansion of urban areas in the north coast of Java in this book reveals the ironic, juxtaposed developments of infrastructure growth and economic modernization, on the one hand, and increased “rural-urban disparity and sustain(ed) rural-urban population mobility” on the other. By pointing to the ways in which global integration and domestic social and economic transformations realign capital and politics along new spatial routes and create new urban-rural associations and regional connections, this chapter posits one possible way of theorizing such changes in Asian contexts.

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