

Chapter 2

From Theory to Practice: Field Research in Four Small Municipalities in Eastern Uttar Pradesh

Abstract This chapter outlines the scope of the study, first subjectively through a field note, then at the regional level of Uttar Pradesh, and finally for the small towns selected. The sampling method is based on a reasoned choice that places the research against the backdrop of a poor and highly politicised region. Uttar Pradesh suffers from poor economic and social development (with particularly poor service levels in small towns); yet over the last few years, the state has also seen a rise in the number of political parties from the lower castes (with high numbers in small towns). Rather than using position papers, this chapter draws on a range of statistical data, visual documents and a field note to review the main features of the small towns selected for the study.

Keywords Uttar Pradesh • Basic urban services • Small towns • Municipalities • Field note

As part of a graphic report on poverty in India,¹ the well-known American journalist and artist Joe Sacco visited Kushinagar district, which is in the same eastern region of Uttar Pradesh as that studied for this research. The description of the difficulties he had obtaining information, of the corruption within the administration and of the violence practised by the system against the Dalits² could easily have been written to describe the situation encountered during the present survey (see Fig. 2.1).

It will thus be important to begin the book by building up a comprehensive picture of the designated regional area in which the research was conducted, as its local character gives rise to specific findings that cannot necessarily be found elsewhere, within a region that has other distinct features. To paraphrase

¹An article entitled “*Les fermiers aux pieds nus*”, first published in January 2011 in issue 13 of the *French Quarterly Review* XXI.

²*Dalit* is a term used to describe the group of people previously regarded as untouchable (also called “*harijans*” by Gandhi), who are traditionally very often relegated to carrying out tasks regarded as impure by upper caste Hindus in India (for more information on “untouchables”, please consult the work of reference written by Robert Deliége, *Les Intouchables en Inde. Des castes d’exclus*, Paris, Imago, 1995).

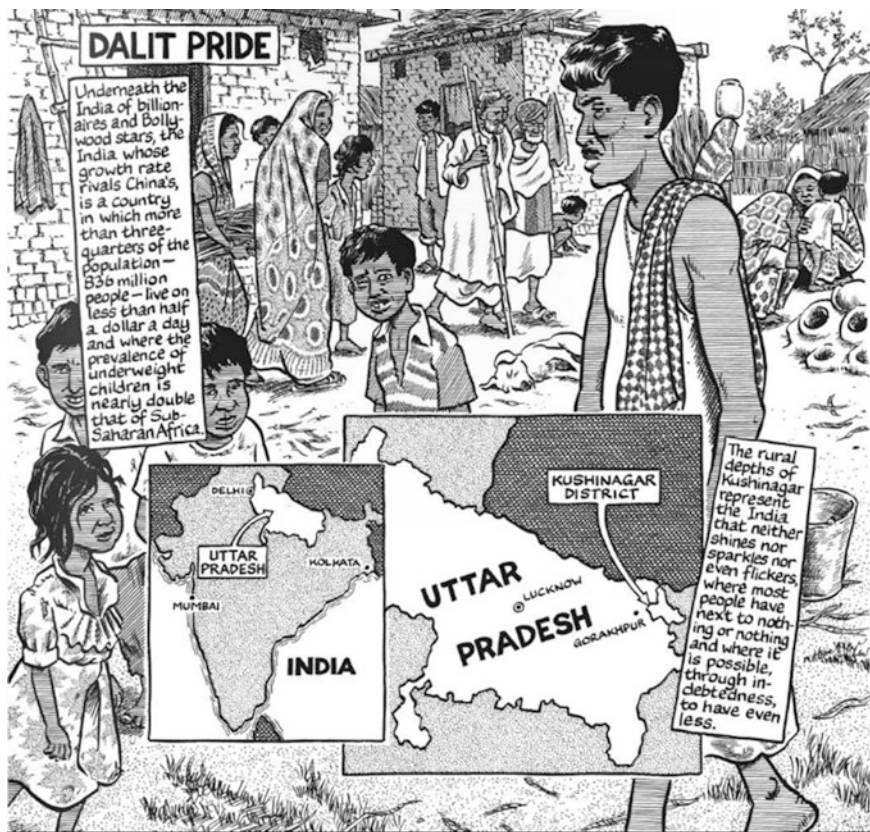


Fig. 2.1 Kushinagar district, by the graphic artist and reporter Joe Sacco. *Source* © Joe Sacco 2012, reproduced here with the kind permission of Joe Sacco

Véronique Dupont and Djallal G. Heuzé, from their publication on towns in southern Asia, we believe that “understanding the processes, identifying the factors underlying the various urban forms and structures involves placing yourself within a given historical and geographic context” (2007, p. 15). The aim of this first chapter is, therefore, to introduce and describe the research area and it begins with a *mise en abyme* in the form of a field note entitled “In deepest Uttar Pradesh”. Deliberately introspective and written in the first person, this brief account seeks to provide an insight into what it is like to conduct empirical research in small towns and to describe some of the unexpected incidents that can occur. These personal observations are then followed by a detailed examination of the criteria that led to the selection of Uttar Pradesh as the study area over other regions of India. This reasoned explanation also includes an overview of some of this state’s specific (economic, social, urban and political) features as they relate to our research. Finally, after having described the selection criteria used to determine the small

towns chosen for in-depth analysis, this chapter concludes with a brief description of each of the small towns studied. Further information on these towns can then be obtained from looking at the colour graphic documents included in this publication.

2.1 In Deepest Uttar Pradesh

The field work did not always run smoothly and some of the difficulties I encountered severely frustrated my attempts to obtain the data I required. By describing some of the stumbling blocks I ran into, this brief field note, originally written after 2 years of work on this research,³ aims to show that, although sometimes difficult, these types of experience are never insurmountable and can ultimately prove to be heuristic and worthy of inclusion in the research process. These adventures of “an innocent geographer”⁴ provide an insight into the everyday challenges of conducting research in small towns in a poor state and into the empiricism these helped create for analysing the processes studied.

“Namaste, Mere Dost!”⁵

In order to build an understanding of my research subject, I needed to immerse myself in the life of small towns and so I set off with just a rucksack on my back and no idea of the challenges awaiting me. Following an initial exploratory visit to a number of small towns, I chose four of these, all similar in size with around 20,000 inhabitants and within the same political and cultural region, namely the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, where the main language is Bhojpuri (predominantly spoken in eastern Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring Bihar) and which is extremely poor. Over the course of my 4-year research, I visited each of these four small towns on numerous occasions, usually accompanied by a research assistant.

During my first ever visit to one of these towns, I was accompanied by an interpreter from Varanasi, who was to help me by explaining the purpose of my research to the local authorities. However, given the harsh reality of these towns and the contempt in which he held the local people, who were less well-educated and from a lower caste, we quickly decided to bring our working relationship to an end. Thus, with the financial support of the Centre de Sciences Humaines in New Delhi (CSH), I hired another assistant, a friend from Delhi, to assist me in the field. Unfortunately, when faced with the daily difficulties of living in these cramped small towns, which he found “too dirty and congested”, he also soon decided to give up the post. After these first two unsuccessful attempts, I finally had the pleasure and good

³A version of this field note (in French) was published online by the review *Carnets de Géographes*: <http://www.carnetsdegeographes.org/> (accessed 26/11/2015).

⁴This is a reference to the excellent book by Nigel Barley, *An Innocent Anthropologist* (1983), which gives a witty account of his field work among the Dwayo people of Cameroon.

⁵“Welcome, my friend!”.

fortune of working instead with Shankare Gowda, who turned out to be the ideal assistant for this research. From a village in Karnataka and with a doctorate in political science, Shankare, who was 37 years old at the time, had already worked with researchers from CSH, interviewing elected officials and Indian civil servants as part of his previous assignments. Patient and highly supportive of my work, Shankare greatly facilitated my immersion in the small towns and, over time, became much more than a simple assistant to become a colleague and true friend with whose help I was able to properly develop my research. Indeed, Shankare played a vital role in my field work, where the language barrier was just one of the many challenges encountered and where it was necessary to adapt the theoretical objectives of the research to the practical realities of a complex region.

The huge city of Mumbai is often used to highlight the excesses of anarchic urbanisation in which all vices thrive. However, I think that, unfortunately, discussions on the failings of “modern urban” India should also include some of the less high profile but equally violent cases of poor small towns. The towns selected for the study are in an extremely poor region, where day-to-day corruption (Jeffrey 2000), which is virtually institutionalised and has been officially described as “rampant” in a Comptroller and Auditor General of India report (CAGI 2009), is coupled with a democracy that is often taken over by the towns’ elite despite a relative openness at parliamentary level (cf. Jaffrelot and Verniers 2012). In addition, the enslavement of poor population groups takes place against a background of permanently shifting traditional feudal systems (Jeffrey and Lerche 2000) and poverty remains an integral part of the landscape (World Bank 2002; Sacco 2012). In relation to this final point, it is important here to revise a hackneyed statistic by clarifying that the people who are the worst-off in India are not necessarily those who live in remote rural areas or in slums in large cities, but instead are to be found in small towns, and particularly in small towns in the least developed—and most disadvantaged—states (for more on this subject, see Himanshu 2006).

As an outsider arriving in one of these small towns, there are things that you initially find shocking, but you are then able to see beyond this first subjective impression and recognise the positive ongoing changes. Once accustomed to the hubbub of the *tempo*⁶ and other overcrowded small transport vehicles, the first thing that strikes you is the *nala*, the foul smelling, permanently overflowing open drains beside which children like to play, sometimes inadvertently stepping into stagnant excrement. The persistent smell of the *nala* is merely the most noticeable precursor of the types of urban issue found in small towns. The rivers that flow through the town are literally drowning in rubbish; the water supply pipes are full of dirty water that seeps in from the drains in which they are laid; any paved or tarmac roads are of such poor quality that they are constantly being repaired; services are rare and the queue to use the only cash machine in the town seems to get interminably longer;

⁶In the region studied, *tempo*, taken from the name of the company, Bajaj Tempo Ltd, is the name usually given to the small, privately owned vans that take people to and from the district’s towns and villages on a daily basis.

finally, the long daily power cuts paralyse the entire town, turning it into a true “night market”. However, people end up getting used to these constraints. Although the situation can appear somewhat “difficult” to a visitor upon arrival (on one of his bad days, my assistant more prosaically described it as “pathetic”), once you have acclimatised and started living in the town, you soon get used to the things that you initially found so shocking as an outsider. And, after all, even if the roads wear out so soon after being built, a few years ago, there were no roads at all. The same is true of public lighting, which admittedly has only been installed along one main road and only works when there is electricity available (which means sometime they can be lit during the day but not overnight). Similarly, there were hardly any solid waste collection or public water supply services available in the past, whereas these services are now being provided today, albeit not to their best potential; however, they are constantly improving. People put up with the shortcomings of the available urban services, which at least do remain *available* and have noticeably improved their daily lives. This urban modernity may be relatively poor quality, but it is modernity nonetheless and better than nothing. In visiting these small towns, I too eventually got used to them, despite a few difficulties that my doctoral supervisors sometimes had to listen to and in spite of my previous experience of working in the slums of Bombay and Chennai. Living with rare electricity, sometimes with scarce water and in the stultifying heat and dust so far away from home, any foreign researcher would feel somewhat lost in such remote small towns as those in deepest Uttar Pradesh.

Certain things were easier to overcome than others and some have even made unforgettable anecdotes. Whilst anecdotes may have no place in a true position paper, they nevertheless provide useful information about what goes on in these small towns. One such telling event took place on my first day in Phulpur, a small town to the west of Allahabad. Upon our arrival in the town, and after having discovered there were no hotels and that it would be impossible to stay in a family home due to people’s general distrust of strangers, my assistant and I found ourselves in a most unusual situation. During our morning wanderings looking for somewhere to stay, I had been rather disconcerted to see some men walking round town armed with sub-machine guns. “Each culture has its own values, habits and customs” as the saying goes, so I had done my best to ignore them and focus on resolving the more pressing and far more reassuring problem of finding somewhere to spend the night. Imagine my surprise when, in an area of highly irregular housing, I suddenly came face-to-face with around a dozen sub-machine guns that had been left outside leaning up against a wall! As one thing led to another, my search for accommodation finally took me to the house of one of the town’s local kingpins, the young head of a gang of “*goondas*”, the local mafia, to whom I ended up introducing myself and, with a tense smile, explaining the reason for my presence in Phulpur. The mafia is an omnipresent part of everyday life in the region, particularly in Phulpur where all prominent figures, including the Mayor, have their own “bodyguards”. After having given my brief explanation, I opted to make myself scarce and, rather than renting a room in an armed gang’s headquarters, we ended up staying in the hall of a private clinic that was still under construction (but already in operation) after having met the clinic’s owner, who was only too happy

to take advantage of the additional income we would provide. My assistant and I therefore spent our nights sleeping either on an old hospital bed or on the small sofa meant for clients and our days walking around the various districts of the town conducting research until the doctor finished his day's consultations and we were able to regain "our" costly temporary lodgings in the evening.

Our problems finding accommodation in Phulpur, which were nowhere near as extreme in the other towns studied, paled into insignificance beside the researcher's main difficulty: the lack of official administrative data, not only within the offices in these small towns, but also within their regional counterparts in Uttar Pradesh, which is rivalled only by the malpractices of a minority of certain civil servants. The locally recruited and poorly trained municipal employees were not always able to help me simply because they lacked the basic technical resources required: there were no computers, minimal accounting and the town map was often hand-drawn, etc. The administrative apparatus in most of the small towns did not have any proper and easily analysable data (see Fig. 2.2).

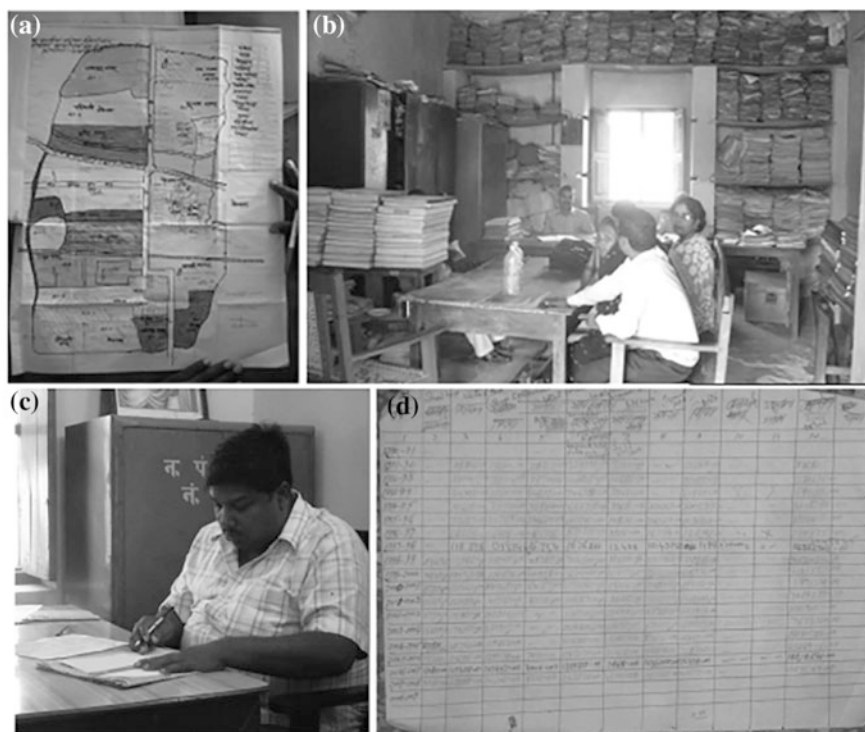


Fig. 2.2 The lack of administrative data. *Note* **a** Map used by the municipality of Siddarthnagar, which provides an inaccurate view of the actual morphology of the town; **b** public electricity company's offices in Kushinagar, with walls covered in stacks of dusty files. **c** Accountant in Kushinagar working without a computer and much training to compile **d** a set of municipal annual budgets which have been especially compiled for this research (see complete financial analysis in Chap. 5). *Source* Author

The difficulties of collecting administrative data became truly apparent when we started the slow and painful task (see Box 2.1) of collecting information on municipal budgets for the period between 1990 and 2009, information which led to a highly revealing analysis, contained the Chap. 5 of this book, of the actual management of small towns.

Box 2.1: In Search of Lost Budgets

Despite the earnest help of numerous civil servants, the difficulties we had in obtaining municipality accounting information revealed failings within the regional administration and highlighted the forced inactivity of staff working within dilapidated buildings and suffering from constant power cuts; buildings which were sometimes strangely empty, but most often stuffed full of a suffocating amount of paperwork. This “search” took us from municipal offices to the offices of the Ministry of Finance and the Directorate of Local Bodies, via a series of diverse regional administrative institutions where these documents should theoretically have been stored and filed. Most often, we would eventually find the document we sought lodged between two piles of dust-covered paper, which had been stuffed in a cupboard and forgotten. The only place these documents had been “filed” was in the small towns; but neither had the regional administration destroyed them.⁷ Ultimately, they had just not been opened for a very long time, let alone properly compiled; a task that needed to be completed to enable us to analyse them.

This financial data collection task did at least have the advantage of providing us with the opportunity to study each administrative level over a long period of time, from the small town up to the state regional capital, and, incidentally, to spare an empathetic thought for the difficult experience that Upamanyu Chatterjee describes in *English, August: An Indian Story*. In this novel, published in 1998, the author narrates his experience of small towns through the eyes of a young Indian civil servant (Agastya Sen, also known as “August”) who lands a job in a small municipality in the heart of India called Madna, in which can be found all the scourges of traditional India. Given the similarity of the situations outlined in the book with my own experience, I have included a short extract here in which the author mischievously describes the dilapidated state of the district administrative building:

⁷ According to the civil servant in charge of the accounting department at the Directorate of Local Bodies in Lucknow, certain files that are considered non-essential are regularly burnt to make space in the archives. Since 2005, the information has been stored with the provincial administration, who is currently working on computerising all the files (Ministry of Finance in November 2009).

“Gandhi Hall stood beside the city police station, a three-storeyed building. For a moment he thought that it had been bombed, something out of a TV news clip on Beirut, broken window panes, old walls, an uncertain air, a kind of wonder at not having collapsed yet. A red banner over the door, and outside, a statue of a short fat bespectacled man with a rod coming out of his arse. He asked in wonder, “Is that a statue of Gandhi?”

Sritvastav laughed shrilly. “Yes. Who did you think?”

“Phew. What’s the rod, sir?”

Srivastav laughed even more. “That’s to prop up the statue. It fell off a few weeks after it was installed. Madna will have many more surprises, Sen.”

(Chatterjee 2006, pp. 28–29)

In addition to the administration, I also had to deal with local, regional and national politicians, members of the national parliament and of the parliament of Uttar Pradesh. At the municipal level, and since implementation of the decentralisation reforms set out in the 74th Constitutional Amendment of 1992, the elected Mayor seems to hold all the power: supposed to be the living embodiment of the democratisation of local life, the Mayor has genuine symbolic power over his fellow citizens. For the researcher, the first surprise when studying the Mayors of these small towns is the number of cases of corruption that they all seem to get embroiled in at some point or another during their careers before emerging from the experience unscathed, thanks to the intervention of political friends in high places. This corruption, which can help “grease the wheels” when on a small scale, can also become a source of local conflict that blocks the urban service development process. However, the Mayor’s influence within *his* town is not limitless as, in reality, he is still a long way from holding all the power and remains highly dependent upon the regional government, which allows him only the minimum amount of leeway, at least in Uttar Pradesh.

Finally, I was further surprised by the lack of an organised civil society in form of residents’ or users’ associations, non-governmental organisations or even small-scale private operators such as those found in major cities. However, there is very little interest in involving civil society in governance or discussing community-based service management in these small towns. The mostly poor population is making do with the services provided, which are admittedly poor but nonetheless available, and so make no attempt to develop other management methods than relying on political relations. There is no real organised local civil opposition to stand up to the local leaders who have taken over the municipal bodies and the local media is most often owned and controlled by the managing elite.

A researcher would thus search in vain to find situations similar to those seen in cities. For example, small towns are relatively uniform in their poverty, making urban fragmentation much different and far less noticeable than in cities, where it is common to find business areas and slums side by side. Therefore, small towns are highly specific research areas, with dynamics that are very distinct from those of the metropolises usually studied. They are still thriving urban settlements, but settlements that have developed within their own territorial context. Thus, it was

necessary to experience life in these towns in order to study them. In addition, having the opportunity to produce part of this book in France, far away from the small towns studied, provided me with the distance required to begin an objective analysis of the data collected. It is these main findings that are provided in this publication: facts that have been documented, examined, compared and interpreted as part of research into the process of setting up municipal institutions in a context where these institutions are only just beginning to emerge.

In human sciences, no matter how meticulous your theoretical preparation, you will always come up against the field reality of a research area that refuses to fit neatly into the methodological framework in which you would like to confine it. As a researcher, you thus have no other choice than to adapt using a more inductive analysis approach and by being prepared to abandon some of your initial assumptions and allowing yourself to be guided by the field, as outlined in *Grounded Theory* developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In spite of the frustration and disappointment they can initially create, practical difficulties should thus be considered heuristic (and even humorous, as illustrated by a well-known “innocent anthropologist” in Cameroon—Nigel Barley 1983) as, ultimately, they always illustrate a specific feature of the research topic. Accepting this can help generate a new starting point for more relaxed and freer research that provides a greater insight into the actual processes being observed. In other words, the twists and turns of empirical research serve to remind the researcher that it is (s)he who needs to adapt to the field, and not the other way round!

2.2 The Selection of the Region for Analysis

Uttar Pradesh (see Fig. 2.3) was selected using a combination of geographical, political, social and institutional variables that are described in more detail below. First, as the aim of the reform is to improve people’s living conditions and reduce poverty, we wanted to conduct the research in a poor area of the country. Based on the available assessments of development programmes in India, it would appear that poor states are unable to free themselves from their constraints as easily as the richest (Bardhan 2008; Kundu 2003), which makes them of interest to our research. Had we been interested in a different perspective, we could also have opted to study a state with strong social and economic development in order to illustrate good urban governance practices. However, as we chose to do the opposite, the state selected needed to have the foundations in place to implement the decentralisation reform, particularly the democratic aspects, political process and administrative institutions, to enable us to observe progress, strengths and weaknesses. Finally, we opted to focus on a regional area suffering from similar urban imbalances to those found in the rest of India, with cities having experienced much faster growth than other types of urban area during the 1990s.

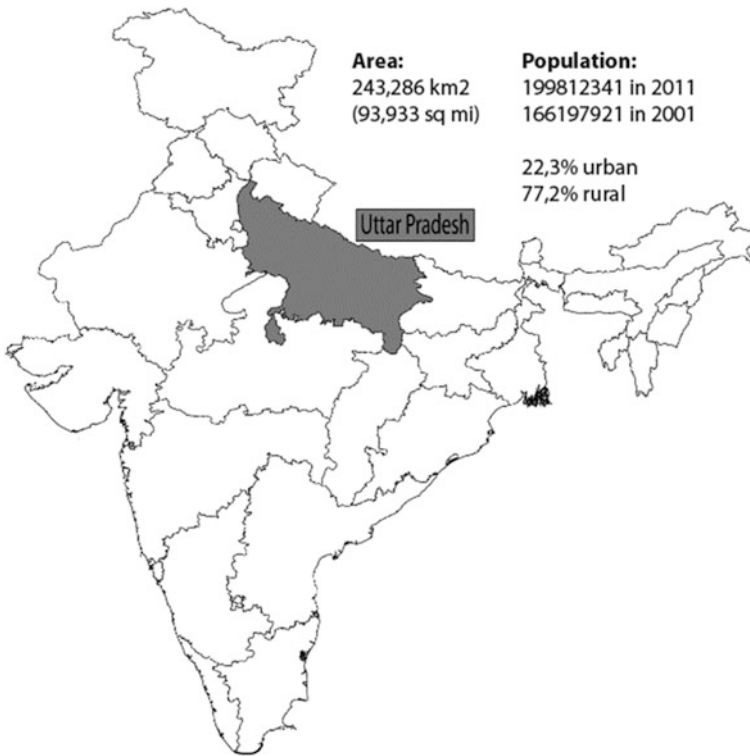


Fig. 2.3 General overview of Uttar Pradesh. *Note* Location of Uttar Pradesh (since 2000). Situated in the centre of the north of India, Uttar Pradesh (UP) covers an area of 294,413 km², which equates to 9 % of the total area of India. With 199 million inhabitants—or 16.5 % of India's total population—in 2011, UP is the country's most populous state and is demographically on a par with the seven largest countries in the world. The development of the state automatically has a major impact on India as a whole. *Source* Based on Census 2011 (GoI 2011)

2.2.1 Political and Institutional Context

2.2.1.1 Indian Democracy Seen Through the Lens of Uttar Pradesh

With a population of 199 million inhabitants in 2011, Uttar Pradesh is not only the most highly populated region in India, but it is also the state with the highest number of *Lok Sabha*⁸ representatives, having 85 members, or 16 % of all MPs. Half of

⁸*Lok Sabha* is the lower house of India's parliament. According to the Constitution, it can contain a maximum of 530 members of parliament, including representatives from the states (elected in proportion to their population), 20 representatives from the Union Territories and 2 representatives of the Anglo-Indian community who are nominated by the President of India for a 5-year term. The *Lok Sabha* has the same legislative powers as the *Rajya Sabha* (the higher house), except in matters of finance, on which it has the final say.

India's prime ministers since independence have come from Uttar Pradesh. The state is home to numerous temples, mausoleums and sacred rivers, making it highly symbolic for the whole of India despite sometimes tense struggles over its identity.⁹ Thus, "political developments in UP will always be of national significance" (World Bank 2002, p. 56). Due to its geographic location on the edge of the Indian peninsula, Uttar Pradesh has been invaded numerous times in its past and experienced various waves of immigration, meaning that today it is home to an extremely socially, religiously and ethnically diverse population. It was the British who created the political entity, naming it the "North-Western Provinces of Agra and Oudh". This was renamed the "*United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*" in 1902 and then shortened to "United Provinces" in 1937. The state was only given its current name of "Uttar Pradesh" ("Northern Province") two-and-a-half years after independence. Unlike the Tamils, Bengalis or Rajasthanis, there is no overarching term given to the inhabitants of the region and, even today, political affiliations and allegiances are often strongly divided along ethnic lines. This social fragmentation is reflected in the political sphere (see Box 2.2): support for the Indian National Congress Party, which was still popular at the national level at the time of the research, is virtually non-existent in Uttar Pradesh, having been crushed by the BJP (*Bharatiya Janata Party*: "Indian People's Party"), BSP (*Bahujan Samaj Party*: "People in Majority") and SP (*Samajwadi Party*: the "Socialist Party"), who have each capitalised on the community divisions among the population to assert their political authority (Pai 2002).

Box 2.2: The Main Political Parties in Uttar Pradesh

Congress is one of the world's oldest and largest political parties and played an important role in India's fight for independence. The party's dominance has progressively diminished since the end of the 1980s as "identity" parties, such as the Hindu nationalist BJP and the pro-Dalit party, BSP, have gained in popularity. Having taken over from the BJP to govern India in 2004, the Congress party suffered a historic defeat in the legislative elections of 2014, finishing a long way behind the Hindu nationalists, who regained power and once more govern the country. The leader of the party, and new government, is Narendra Modi, a charismatic leader and controversial figure due to his extolling of "Hindutva" ("Hinduness") and his part in his state government's handling of anti-Muslim riots in 2002 in Gujarat.

In Uttar Pradesh, the destruction of Ayodhya mosque in 1992 by Hindu activists had already caused riots across the country and led to "President's

⁹For example, the destruction of Ayodhya mosque in 1992, sparked by Hindu nationalists from the BJP and RSS, caused widespread violence between Hindus and Muslims throughout the country. It also led to a state of emergency being declared in Uttar Pradesh and the government being dismissed (then led by the BJP). The court's decision, announced in November 2010, that divided the area under dispute into three equal parts between the warring parties, is highly symbolic of the tensions that exist in India between Muslims and Hindus.

Rule” being invoked within the state (whereby the state came under the direct control of the central government). In this region, which is home to a high proportion of people from the lower castes and classes, the SP and BSP have successively joined forces and fought each other for power. The BSP gains most of its support from the “untouchables”, who make up over 21 % of the population (compared to an average of 19 % for the whole of India), whereas the SP’s electoral base is the *Yadavs*, one of the largest Muslim castes. During the research period from 2008 to 2012, the BSP had been at the head of the government since 2007, having taken over from the SP; however, the SP went on win an absolute majority at the 2012 elections and returned to power, thanks in part to the Muslim vote.

Source Dictionnaire de l’Inde and Encyclopédie Larousse

The “Untouchables”, who are usually referred to as “Dalits”¹⁰ in Uttar Pradesh, are administratively classed as Scheduled Castes (SC).¹¹ Although positive discrimination for civil service jobs has been in place for around a century, for a long time these groups were too poor to take full advantage of their quotas and, until recently, posed no threat to the Congress party led by the upper castes. In contrast, the “unfavourable treatment” reserved for the Other Backward Classes (OBC),¹² who were initially not given quotas for jobs within the administration, was triggered by the upper castes’ fears of being overrun by groups whose demographic and economic weight was far greater than that of the untouchables (the Mandal Commission¹³ estimated that 52 % of the country’s population were OBC at the time) (Jaffrelet 2002, pp. 143–144). The former Prime Minister, Vishwanath Pratap

¹⁰The term *Dalit* (“oppressed”) is often preferred to “*untouchable*”, which some consider derogatory.

¹¹Although it appears to fly in the face of common sense, the Indian Constitution has abolished “untouchability”, but not the caste (for more on this subject, see, Herrenschmidt (1997).

¹²Along with *Scheduled Castes* (SC) and *Scheduled Tribes* (ST), *Other Backward Classes* (OBC) is another designation given to disadvantaged groups by the government. “Considered to be *Shudra*, the castes concerned have a ritual status that places them between the twice-born on the one hand and the Scheduled Castes on the other.[...] it is up to each state to compile their official lists of OBC [...] the ambivalent terminology of which reflects the difficulty in defining their social type” (*Dictionnaire de l’Inde*, 2009, p. 155).

¹³This commission, which was named after its president, B.P. Mandal, was established in 1978 by the Janata party government to consider the needs of the OBC, a category now recognised by the Constitution but not fully defined. The commission recommended reserving 27 % of job opportunities in central government agencies and public-owned enterprises for the OBC. V.P. Singh’s decision to implement the Mandal report was greeted with opposition from the upper castes (certain students set themselves on fire) as the new quotas meant fewer job opportunities for them in the government sector, which had always been their private turf (*Dictionnaire de l’Inde contemporaine*, 2009, pp. 21–22).

Singh's recognition of this situation turned Uttar Pradesh into one of the rare states where the OBC also benefitted from quotas in the same way as the Scheduled Castes.

Although these quotas for government jobs did not really help create equal socio-economic conditions (as Mandal himself acknowledged in the 1980s), they did transform the lower castes' relationship with the political powers. The administrative categories enabled castes with a demographic majority to come together to form powerful electoral coalitions (Khilnani 2002). The OBC's political influence automatically grew when voters from the lower castes decided to stop voting for the mainly upper caste Congress candidates and switch their support to the *Samajwadi Party* (SP) instead, in which they were better represented (Chandra 2000). Similarly, the small Dalit elite of civil servants hired through the administrative quotas later joined forces to set up the BSP, which has been continually growing in popularity in Uttar Pradesh. These caste-based parties have been able to develop a winning strategy by turning the OBC and SC from simple administrative categories into "*political* categories for which the caste system is major source of social oppression" (Jaffrelot 2002, p. 144). They have thus become a driving force in the unification of marginalised groups. Zoya Hasan sums this situation up well when she says "in other words, the Castes and Tribes identified and the OBC have become political categories thanks to the quotas" (Hasan 2006, p. 82).

The major development in the role of castes in Uttar Pradesh embodies the "plebeianisation" of Indian democracy better than anywhere else in the country. At the beginning of the research period, in 2008, Mulayam Singh Yadav, leader of the Samajwadi Party, relinquished the position of Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh to the high-profile Kumari Mayawati (see Box 2.3), the first Dalit woman to hold the post, and a symbol in her own right of the "untouchables" rising power (which make up 20.5 % of the population in Uttar Pradesh, compared to a national average of 16.2 % in 2011).

Box 2.3: The Mayawati Phenomenon

Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in 1995 and 1997, then again from 2002 to 2003, and finally from 2007 to 2012, Mayawati, a single woman, former teacher and Dalit, had an entirely unique political profile. She became secretary of the BSP (which works to improve the situation of the Dalits) upon its creation in 1984 and steadily began to play an increasingly greater role in the party, thanks to the support of its founder, Kanshi Ram. For Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal, Mayawati "is nobody's heir", "she is strongly committed and challenges conventions, strongly backed by her supporters" (Tawa Lama-Rewal 2007, p. 9). She was elected on a platform of social change that focused on furthering the interests of the Dalits. One of the first projects she launched specifically targeted the development of Dalit districts and was named the "Kanshi Ram" programme in honour of the BSP founder who died

in 2006. For political analysts, this “social revolution” was above all driven by Mayawati. In an article that appeared in *The Hindustan Times*¹⁴ on 10 April 2007, Dipankar Gupta was quick to compare Mayawati’s political strategy with that of Mao: while never losing sight of their support base (the Dalits for Mayawati and the poor peasants for Mao), they both managed to obtain the support of dominant strategic partners to win power (the Brahmin for Mayawati,¹⁵ and rich peasants and some landowners for Mao). However, some observers view “Mayawati’s revolution” as a “Brahmin counter-revolution” as, in her quest for power to topple Mulayam Singh, Mayawati was forced to strategically concede a “disproportionate” number of seats to the upper castes (Teltumbde 2007, p. 2148; Gupta 2007)¹⁶. For more information on the political processes in place in Uttar Pradesh, please see Sudha Pai’s work entitled *Political Process in Uttar Pradesh. Identity, Economic Reforms and Governance*, Dorling Kindersley, India, 2007. Criticised for her management of the state and suspected of corruption, she later lost the election to the BSP’s rival party, the SP.

The legislative elections in 2012 signalled an end to Mayawati’s reign and returned the Samajwadi Party to power, led by Akhilesh Yadav (son of a former state Chief Minister). In many ways, Uttar Pradesh symbolically embodies the political changes that have been taking place in contemporary India, which makes it a region of great interest for research into implementation of the decentralisation reform.

2.2.1.2 A Municipal Tradition Within a Complex Administrative System

Its size automatically makes Uttar Pradesh the state with the highest number of municipalities. In 2011, 630 urban settlements had local urban government status and thus fall into one of three categories of urban local bodies set out in the 74th Amendment (see Box 2.4).

¹⁴*The Hindustan Times* is the second most widely read English language newspaper in India after the Times of India (according to the Indian Readership Survey).

¹⁵Since 1999, the BSP has strategically traded some of their seats in parliament in return for Brahmin support in order to win power (Gupta 2007, p. 119).

¹⁶Anand Teltumbde’s and Smita Gupta’s analysis challenges the Dalit victory, maintaining that the Brahmin, aware of the other parties’ weak support (BJP and SP), strategically joined forces with the BSP to remain in power in response to Mayawati’s rallying call in 2005.

Box 2.4: The Three Categories of Local Government

The 74th Constitutional Amendment defines three types of urban local bodies:

- The Municipal Corporation or “Nagar Nigam” is responsible for local government within cities;
- the Municipality or “Nagar Palika” is the name given to local government within smaller cities and large towns;
- the “Nagar Panchayat” is responsible for settlements that are “in transition” and which include small towns.

It is up to the regional state to identify and allocate an urban settlement to one of the three categories using a range of (demographic, spatial, fiscal and economic) criteria, the definition of which remains at the state’s discretion.¹⁷

The distinction between the three different types of local government is important as the category to which a town is assigned has the greatest legal bearing on how the municipality operates, both on an institutional and financial level. However, most states have preferred not to explicitly define the criteria for designating towns to categories within their municipal legislation, instead leaving this decision to the governor of the province, as is the case in Uttar Pradesh.¹⁸

Thus, in Uttar Pradesh in 2011, there were 14 Municipal Corporations, 192 Nagar Palika and 424 Nagar Panchayats (the most in all states in India, far more than in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh that contained 169 and 271, respectively). There is strong political will within the state to ensure democratic representation within these new local government bodies. For the municipal elections, the policy of positive discrimination for women, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) was further extended to Other Backward Classes (OBC), despite this not being a requirement of the Constitutional Amendment. Uttar Pradesh has historically played a pioneering role in the devolution of powers. During the British Raj, municipal legislation was first drawn up for Lucknow in 1856, followed by similar

¹⁷“The Governor of the State taking into consideration (i) the population, size and density of the area, (ii) percentage of employment in non-agricultural activities, (iii) economic importance and (iv) any other factor may specify the type of municipality” (Article 243Q). The demographic threshold criterion used to distinguish a “settlement in transition” from a “small urban area” or “large urban area” is thus not explicitly defined in the 74th Amendment, whereas it was included in the 65th Amendment bill of 1989 (which was rejected by the Rajya Sabha) and gave a size of 10,000–20,000 for the first category, 20,000–300,000 for the second and over 300,000 for the third.

¹⁸The municipal legislation states that “3. Declaration etc. of transitional area and smaller urban areas: (1) Any area specified by the governor in a notification under clause 2 of article 243Q of the Constitution with such limits as are specified therein to be a transitional area or a smaller urban area, as the case may be. (2) The Governor may, by a subsequent notification under clause 2 of article 243 Q of the Constitution, include or exclude any area in or from a transitional area or a smaller urban area referred to in subsection 1, as the case may be” (Uttar Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1916, p. 6 amended on 31 May 1994). Government of Uttar Pradesh 2007.

texts in the North-Western and Awadh Provinces in 1873. This municipal culture was thus already in place several years before the famous resolutions of Lord Mayo and Lord Ripon, which both recognised the legitimacy of local government for managing local affairs (see Box 2.5).

Box 2.5: Lord Mayo's Resolution (1870) and the Ripon Resolution (1882)

For the British colonial powers, the aim of recognising local government was to improve the efficiency of local economic management and maintain social order. In 1870, Lord Mayo's Resolution recognised local governments as necessary tools for improving the administrative governance of a region and promoted fiscal decentralisation to local bodies, but also—and above all—to increase the funds of the East India Company (Khatoon 1980; Dossal 1991). However, it was in 1882 that the greatest change took place when Viceroy Lord Ripon, the “father of local government in India” (Rai and Singh 2007, p. 10), passed a resolution recognising that the growth of towns was creating administrative and financial management issues. The aim of this “Local Governments’ Magna Carta” was to make decision-making more democratic and “an instrument of popular and political education” as Lord Ripon described it (Maheshwari 1971, p. 17). Councils elected with a two-thirds majority were set up in each province and made responsible for taxes within the area under their jurisdiction. British officers did nevertheless manage to place restrictions on this by placing local governments under the indirect control of the district magistrates and by allowing the provincial governments to organise local elections at their own discretion (Shah 1955).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the 1914 Uttar Pradesh Town Area Act and the 1916 Uttar Pradesh Municipalities Act were passed setting out the scope of the municipalities’ authority. They were followed by the Uttar Pradesh Municipal Corporations Act in 1959¹⁹ and have subsequently been amended numerous times. These local governments, strengthened by implementation of the decentralisation reform, thus became part of an exceedingly complex regional administrative system.

Chaired by the Chief Secretary, Uttar Pradesh’s 83 technical departments (finance, planning, water, roads, local governments, etc.) are brought together under the Secretariat (or cabinet). This Secretariat assists the Council of Ministers (of which there are a hundred in total), who advise the Chief Minister, the elected head

¹⁹The 1959 U.P. Municipal Corporations Act and the 1916 UP Municipalities Act are also known as U.P. Nagar Nigam, 1959 U.P. Nagar Palika, 1916.

of the government. The Governor, appointed by the President of India, executes the decisions made by the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister sets the budget and makes the major political decisions, which are coordinated by the Secretariat in Lucknow. The responsibility for implementing these decisions then passes to each of the 83 departments, who delegate their activities to Uttar Pradesh's 19 divisions, then to the district agencies (spread over a total of 83 districts, thus there are about 3–6 districts in each division) and down to the municipal level (or, for rural public policy, to the “teshils”, of which there are around 3–6 per district, and to the blocks, of which there can be between 0 and 20 per district). These various levels and each department concerned are coordinated by the Divisional Commissioner, the District Magistrate (DM) and his deputy, the District Vice-Magistrate, and the Executive Officer (EO), who works on behalf of the municipalities (and so, since the 74th Amendment, comes under the authority of the elected Mayor).

This organisational set-up has made it extremely difficult to provide effective public services as it is so highly fragmented. A study revealed that the number of administrative divisions and departments mushroomed during the 1980s under the pressure of political compromises introduced by the political leaders. Thus, whereas in 1947 there were only 42 departments and sub-departments in the Secretariat in Lucknow, by 2000, this figure had risen to 72 departments and over 150 sub-departments. Between 1965 and 1974, the number of administrative divisions grew by 50 % and there was a sevenfold increase in the number of civil servants in supervisory roles. In 1965, each secretariat supervised 1.82 civil servants within a given section; in the mid-1990s, this ratio stood at 1.14 (Dhar and Gupta 1999).

The political instability created by the coalitions formed in parliament has a considerable impact on this administrative set-up. Each government reshuffle is systematically followed by a reorganisation of the administrative apparatus (to get rid of political rivals and install supporters in their place) (Jaffrelot 2003), which has led some to say that “the only thing that moves in Uttar Pradesh is its civil servants”: on average, a District Magistrate's mandate lasts for 6–18 months, whereas a Divisional Commissioner or state secretary rarely remains in their post for longer than 10 months (Dhar and Gupta 1999). A 2002 World Bank report noted that, in order to stabilise political coalitions, the successive governments had to split or create functions and responsibilities. Thus, the report identified four energy ministries and four education departments, for example. In addition, some functions, such as roads maintenance, are split between different institutions and there are a number of other departments that all cover similar—or exactly the same—issues (such as five departments working on similar social development topics). The separation between the secretariat and the departments in the field has become extremely tenuous as the secretariat's activities have expanded to cover part of the departments' remit. Ultimately, this fragmentation of responsibilities, along with the accompanying proliferation of rules, has made coordination between agencies particularly complex and had a negative impact on the effectiveness of everyday local public services.

2.2.2 Towns and Cities in a Poor State: Urban Imbalances and Poor Services

2.2.2.1 Urbanisation in Uttar Pradesh: Uneven Urban Development

In 2011, UP had 44.4 million inhabitants and, despite being home to 11.8 % of India's urban population (second only to Maharashtra), it was still a predominantly (78 %) rural state that was less urbanised than its neighbours (see Table 2.1).

From 1971 onwards, there was relatively rapid urban development in Uttar Pradesh, followed by a significant slowdown. From 1971 to 1981, the state's annual average growth rate stood at +4.78 %, whereas the growth rate for India as a whole was +3.79 %. Over the next decade, from 1981 to 1991, annual growth in Uttar Pradesh stood at +3.27 %, compared to an overall national rate of 3.09 %. This was mainly a result of the central government's urban sprawl policy that focused on less-developed states in an attempt to reduce metropolisation (Dupont 2008). Although it experienced a considerable slowdown between 1991 and 2001, the urban population of UP continued to grow at a rate of 2.84 % per year, slightly above the national average of +2.73 % per year. However, despite this rapid urban growth, Uttar Pradesh still had very few urban centres. In 2001, only 20.8 % of the population lived in towns or cities, meaning that four out of five people continued to reside in the state's 97,942 villages. The most recent results from the 2011 census appear to indicate a clear downward trend, with an annual urban growth rate of only 0.9 % between 2001 and 2011 (whereas the average for India was 4.1 % for the same period), meaning urbanisation within the region now stands at 22.28 %.

Urban development within Uttar Pradesh appears fairly typical of the urbanisation taking place in other poor states in India, where there is a correlation between urban development and the development of the state (Hashim 2009). In general, the strong urban growth of poorly developed states, such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh or Orissa, can be ascribed to the industrial and urban sprawl policies introduced in the years following independence. The end of this type of programme at the start of the 1990s, the withdrawal of the state and a shift towards more liberal policies²⁰ led to a slowdown in urbanisation and a greater focus on existing cities and the more developed and urbanised states, such as Tamil Nadu, the Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat (Sandesara 1991).

As far as growth per town size is concerned, urban development in Uttar Pradesh during the 1990s was relatively similar to that seen in the rest of India in that the reforms of the 1990s led to the more rapid growth of large towns and cities.²¹ Apart

²⁰Such as the devaluation and partial convertibility of the rupee in 1992 to help integration into the global economy, for example.

²¹It is, however, important to note the particularly high growth of small towns in West Bengal (+63.7 % during the 1990s). This is due to the implementation of a radical land reform programme, which, over a 20-year period, was of huge benefit to the poor in terms of participation, increased agricultural output and human development (Crook and Sverrisson 2001).

Table 2.1 Breakdown of India's urban population since 1971 (in % based on Census data)

States	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Andhra Pradesh	19	23	27	27	33
Arunachal	4	6	12	20	23
Assam	9	10	11	13	14
Bihar	10	12	13	11	11
Chhattisgarh	–	–	–	20	23
Delhi	90	93	90	93	98
Goa	26	32	41	50	62
Gujarat	28	31	34	37	43
Haryana	18	22	25	29	35
Himachal Pradesh	7	8	9	10	10
Jammu and Kashmir	19	21	23	25	27
Jharkhand	–	–	–	22	24
Karnataka	24	29	31	34	39
Kerala	16	19	26	26	48
Madhya Pradesh	16	20	23	27	28
Maharashtra	31	35	39	42	45
Manipur	13	26	28	24	30
Meghalaya	15	18	19	20	20
Mizoram	11	25	46	50	52
Nagaland	10	16	17	18	29
Orissa	8	12	13	15	17
Punjab	24	28	30	34	37
Rajasthan	18	21	23	23	25
Sikkim	9	16	9	11	25
Tamil Nadu	30	33	34	44	48
Tripura	10	11	15	17	26
<i>Uttar Pradesh^a</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>
Uttaranchal	–	–	–	26	31
West Bengal	25	26	27	28	32
India	20	23	26	28	31

NB The states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal (or Uttarakhand) were created after the 1991 Census and thus do not appear in figures collected prior to 2001.

^aAs of 2001, the mountainous region of Uttar Pradesh has been a separate state known as Uttaranchal

from this particular case, urbanisation in Uttar Pradesh followed the same two-speed pattern as in the rest of the country: whereas in 1901, less than a quarter of the urban population lived in cities with over 100,000 habitants, in 2011, 63 % of urbanisation was taking place in the Category 1 cities and urban development in small- and medium-sized towns was slowing. However, according to the geographer Frédéric Landy, this so-called crisis in small towns is quite simply a “statistical

Table 2.2 Percentage of the urban population per category of town in Uttar Pradesh

	Category I (over 100,000 inhab.)	Category II (from 50,000 to 99,999 inhab.)	Category III (from 20,000 to 49,999 inhab.)	Category IV (from 10,000 to 19,999 inhab.)	Category V (from 5,000 to 9,999 inhab.)	Category VI (fewer than 5,000 inhab.)
1901	24.20	13.97	11.42	18.28	21.22	10.91
1911	25.66	13.49	11.00	18.47	19.64	11.74
1921	25.71	15.34	10.68	15.73	19.60	12.93
1931	27.89	14.25	15.82	15.29	16.78	09.97
1941	37.77	10.81	16.99	12.89	15.21	06.32
1951	45.70	09.04	14.40	11.42	13.51	05.94
1961	54.88	11.76	16.65	10.85	05.65	00.22
1971	57.66	10.93	16.87	09.83	04.54	00.18
1981	51.48	12.43	12.82	13.39	08.46	01.42
1991	55.51	11.43	14.04	12.27	05.85	00.51
2001 ^a	59.49	10.95	15.61	10.77	03.03	0.14
2011	63.32	09.25	13.85	09.49	03.71	0.38

^aOn 9 November 2000, the mountainous region of Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, became a separate state
Source Census of India

myth” (Landy 2002, p. 188) because, as Kamala Marius-Gnanou and François Moriconi-Ebrard also note, the classification used is that set out in the Census of India, in which towns are grouped “in categories of sizes bound by fixed thresholds within an environment undergoing demographic expansion [that] inevitably fuels the image of an urban boom that is primarily...one of statistical categories” (Marius-Gnanou and Moriconi-Ebrard 2007, p. 1) (see Table 2.2).

This growth in the urban population of Uttar Pradesh was accompanied by an increase in the number of urban settlements, which rose from 293 in 1971 to 659 in 1981, then to 702 in 1991, 704 in 2001 (of which 66 were Census Towns) and 984 in 2011²² (which included 267 Census Towns²³). This increase in the number of towns since 1971 has also changed the urban structure of the population due to the fact that the size of these towns has grown. There were only two metropolitan cities in 1981; however, Varanasi was subsequently granted this status in 1991, followed by Agra and Allahabad in 2001. Thus, even if we exclude Ghaziabad (which has

²²These figures include not only the municipalities but also all other non-rural settlements identified by the Census (such as Census Towns, Outgrowths, Cantonment Boards and Industrial Townships).

²³These are former rural settlements now considered to be urban settlements as they meet the Census of India criteria (having over 5,000 inhabitants, a population density of at least 400 inhabitants per km² and at least 75 % of the working population not working in the agricultural sector). By identifying such a large number of new Census Towns, the 2011 Census found itself at odds with the states who were reluctant to grant these towns official municipality (or Statutory Town) status, both for political (newcomers into the municipal political arena) and financial reasons (requirement to grant funding to all towns with municipality status).

2.38 million inhabitants but is part of the Delhi urban area), Uttar Pradesh still contains six million-plus cities (Kanpur: 2.92 million; Lucknow: 2.9 million; Agra: 1.76 million; Varanasi: 1.43 million; Meerut: 1.42 million; and Allahabad: 1.21 million), which alone are home to over one-quarter (30.57 %) of the state's urban population. The 47 other cities with over 100,000 inhabitants, meanwhile, contain a third (32.7 %) of the urban population. The remaining towns account for less than 40 % of the state's urbanisation with 9.25 % of the population living in the 59 category II towns, 13.85 % in the 212 category III towns, 9.49 % in the 308 towns in category IV, 3.71 % in the 233 towns in category V and 0.14 % in the 27 category VI towns.

As far as network-based technical services are concerned, this urban concentration brings with it both advantages and disadvantages: high population densities help reduce costs and enable economies of scale by increasing coverage within the same area; however, these high population densities also place greater pressure on resources and the environment. In addition, many of the people moving to towns and cities are poor, which requires service providers to find adapted solutions. It is estimated that the slum population grew from 5.8 million in 1991 to 7.7 million in 2001, before falling slightly to 6.3 million in 2011; still a very high figure.

2.2.2.2 Poor Municipal Services in the Towns of Uttar Pradesh

The management set-up for urban public services was redefined by the 1992 constitutional recognition of local governments to whom eighteen functions are to be devolved (see Box 2.6).

Box 2.6: Local Management Responsibilities Introduced Under the 74th Amendment

According to Article 243 W, the states are to transfer the following 18 functions to the municipalities:

1. Urban planning and town planning; 2. Regulation of land use and construction; 3. Planning for economic and social development; 4. Roads and bridges; 5. Domestic, industrial and commercial water supply; 6. Public health, sanitation, and solid waste management; 7. Fire services; 8. Urban forestry, ecological and environmental management; 9. Safeguarding the interests of the physically and mentally disabled; 10. Slum improvement and upgrading; 11. Urban poverty alleviation; 12. Provision of urban amenities, including parks, gardens and playgrounds; 13. Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic activities; 14. Management of burials and burial grounds and installation of an electricity-powered crematorium; 15. Prevention of cruelty to animals; 16. Registration of births and deaths; 17. Public amenities and infrastructure, including street lighting, car parks, bus stops and other public conveniences; 18. Regulation of slaughterhouses and tanneries.

The functions transferred to municipalities include the provision of technical services (such as solid waste management, water supply and sanitation, for instance) and urban regulatory responsibilities (such as economic and social development planning, for example or setting up poverty alleviation and slum improvement programmes, etc.).

Access to water in small towns in Uttar Pradesh

In India, where, at the beginning of the 1990s, 37.7 % of households were without access to water, the water distribution service has long epitomised the failures of a centralised management system. According to the 2011 Census, 53.4 % of India's population still has no piped water at home despite implementation of the reform. In Uttar Pradesh, according to data from Jal Nigam (JN, the governmental agency in charge of water), the entire urban population of the region's towns and cities, both large and small, has had access to water since 2004. Similarly, the Indian census of 2011 confirmed a highly encouraging access rate for these towns of 95.8 %. Unfortunately, however, this official version needs to be put into perspective as, although highly positive, it reveals little about the wide range of different situations encountered.

Firstly, these figures aggregate all modes of access, whether access is through a water supply system or standalone handpumps and boreholes (not connected to the public network). In reality, only just over half of the urban population has access to running water from the piped network, with the remaining households obtaining their water from other sources (in 2011, 46.3 % used handpumps and boreholes, 0.8 % used traditional wells and 1.3 % used surface water). 21.2 % of households have no access to water at home and, for 5.2 % of these, the nearest water point is more than 100 metres away.²⁴ After having increased during the 1980s, from 50.76 % in 1981 to 58.8 % in 1991, the number of households with access to the piped network dropped by 2.32 % during the 1990s to stand at 56.5 % in 2001. This figure then fell by a further five percent to reach 51.5 % in 2011, placing Uttar Pradesh among the states with the lowest piped water network connection rates in India and revealing a heavy dependence on boreholes and handpumps.

In addition, by grouping towns together in the same simplistic "urban" category, many of the official statistics fail to show differentiated access based on urban settlement size. However, access to the water supply network remains low as it is also being hampered by the extremely poor performances of a service for which the distribution standards, set by Jal Nigam, not only vary considerably with the size of the town (between 135 and 150 l per capita per day in cities of over 500,000 inhabitants and between 70 and 135 l for all other towns since 2002), but are also rarely met by a third of towns and cities, particularly small towns (Mishra 2002). Thus, in 2001, 85 % of towns with between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants had a service that met fewer than 50 % of the standards. In contrast, two-thirds of towns

²⁴Thus, for the economist Amitabh Kundu, the apparent service improvement is primarily a statistical mirage created by the official definition of "access to water" as, since 2001, households with a water source more than 100 m away from their home are now included in the new, vague category of "away", created for the 2001 Census (Kundu 2009).

with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants (67 % of towns) provided a service that met over 75 % of the set standards, as these were easier to attain (70 l per day). This situation illustrates the problems encountered when progressing from a system supplying a small number of inhabitants, essentially a large village with a piped water network, to a proper urban water scheme that needs to supply a population of over 20,000.

Finally, as they are based on the quantity of water distributed rather than the quantity actually received, these government figures tend to overstate the actual situation experienced by the population as physical losses of around 25–40 % (McKenzie and Ray 2009) further impact on the already poor performances seen. This data also overlooks other issues, such as intermittent service, which directly affects the water quality: when the service is only available for a few hours each day, the resulting changes in pressure damage the pipes and the water in the network is polluted by wastewater seeping into the system.

Road services in small towns in Uttar Pradesh

In the definition of “road services” used here, we include all public services that involve the “road” infrastructure: sanitation services and wastewater and storm water drainage, which also includes the public toilet system; the roads and public lighting services; and road cleaning services.

Sanitation and toilets

According to the official census figures, the percentage of households with access to toilets in towns in Uttar Pradesh doubled between 2001 and 2011, rising from 32 % to 77.2 %. However, in practice, only 28.3 % of Uttar Pradesh’s urban population is connected to a sewer system, which is below the national average of 32.6 %. To offset this lack of sewerage, nearly 47 % of urban households have a septic tank; however, nearly 15 % of the urban population continues to practice open defecation inside towns. This particularly low coverage rate is due to the fact that sanitation has never been defined as a priority in public policy, not only in Uttar Pradesh but also in the majority of Indian states (Janakarajan et al. 2006).

This lack of infrastructure is particularly acute in small towns. According to the Directorate of Local Bodies, only 55 towns had a sewer system (or at least a partial system) in 2000, and the majority of these were large towns and cities: 11 Municipal Corporations, 41 Municipalities and 3 Nagar Panchayats. Of these 55 towns and cities, only 5 had wastewater treatment plants (Farrukhabad, Allahabad, Kanpur, Mirzapur and Varanasi), which were constructed as part of the first phase of the Ganga Action Plan.²⁵ However, even in these towns, much of the wastewater remains untreated. There are, therefore, virtually no sanitation services in Uttar Pradesh and, in small towns, sewer systems remain the exception rather than the rule.

²⁵*Ganga Action Plan* is a programme set up to protect the water of the River Ganges. Phase 1 was launched in 1985 and Phase 2 in 1993. It aims to reduce the volume of wastewater discharged into the Ganges, but has not yet managed to eradicate pollution.

Jal Nigam, the public agency responsible for sanitation infrastructure, paints a slightly less grim but equally unsatisfactory picture. By breaking this coverage rate down by type of “network-based” and “off-network” sanitation option (underground network, open drains, simple public toilets, no facilities), it reveals there are significant inequalities between the different sizes of town and that, essentially, the smaller the town, the poorer the service level. In 2001, 75 % of inhabitants in Municipal Corporations were connected to a sewer system; however, in municipalities, this figure was only 20 % and struggled to reach 1 % in the 418 Nagar Panchayats (small towns). In reality, in small towns, 40 % of the population’s wastewater is disposed of through an open air drainage system and 57 % have no access to sanitation at all, neither underground sewers, open drains nor access to public toilets.

Roads, construction, lighting and repairs

About 10 years ago, Om Prakash Singh, a former roads minister, said of the roads infrastructure: “I am myself perplexed. None of the officials know how many roads are lying half-finished and for how many years” (*The Times of India* http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/stateplan/upsdr/vol-2/Chap_b8.pdf, (p. 247), 24 February 2001). It is estimated that nearly 40 % of the roads are not paved and that about a fifth of all roads are unsuitable for motorised vehicles, making Uttar Pradesh the state in which travel is most difficult (Planning Commission, 2009). Here again, it is small towns that are most affected. According to the Directorate of Urban Local Bodies, fewer than 2 % of the state’s 13,018 km² of asphalted roads are to be found in the Nagar Panchayat. Instead, over 50 % of these roads are located in the other municipalities and the remainder in the eleven Municipal Corporations.

Similarly, the majority of towns lack proper public lighting and this situation is particularly noticeable in the smallest towns, which have eight times fewer light bulbs than other towns in Uttar Pradesh (around 10 for every 1,000 inhabitants in the Nagar Panchayats compared to an average of 80 in the other municipalities). It is important to note that this poor street lighting is also due to power supply issues: with electricity consumption of only 567 kWh per inhabitant in 2001, India has one of the lowest per capita rates of energy consumption in the world. Finally, the roads within these towns are often strewn with rubbish. It is estimated that Uttar Pradesh generates 400 g of solid waste per capita per day. According to J.S. Mishra, 2.8 street cleaners are required for every 1,000 inhabitants; however, in the majority of towns, both large and small, this recommended figure is not met. Similarly, the majority of towns fail to supply the recommended number of public rubbish bins, namely 1 per 100 households (Mishra 2002, p. 179).

2.2.2.3 Municipalities that are Financially Dependent on Regional Transfers

As in other states, the 74th Constitutional Amendment has introduced a State Finance Commission (SFC) into Uttar Pradesh that is responsible for reviewing the municipalities' financial structure on a 5-year basis and producing recommendations for making improvements (Articles 243I and 243Y), particularly by determining how much they should be awarded in grants and use their local taxation. In theory, to ensure its *autonomy*, a municipality's share of "internal resources"²⁶ needs to be higher than its available "external resources".²⁷ Municipal *autonomy* "is the expression of [municipalities'] capacity to make decisions and take actions in accordance with their remits" (Dafflon and Madiès 2008, p. 63). Theoretically, this autonomy is of two distinct and interdependent types: *financial autonomy*²⁸ and *budgetary autonomy*.²⁹ In theory, within a decentralised system, the only way for municipalities to ensure they have the freedom to implement policies that are not dictated by higher levels of authority but instead meet the needs and demands of the local population is by raising its own revenue.

Implementation of decentralisation in India has thus been accompanied by a reorganisation of the way in which local tax revenue is distributed between the three levels of government (see Box 2.7).

Box 2.7: General Breakdown of Tax Revenue Since Implementation of the 74th Amendment

- Central government: income tax, wealth tax, corporate tax, customs duties.
- Regional government: indirect taxes, business tax, VAT, tax on income from property.

²⁶Termed "internal resources" in Indian accounting and financial documents, these are funds received from local "tax and non-tax revenue". "Tax revenue" is income received from local taxation (property tax, business tax, taxes on vehicles, animals, trade, etc.), whereas "non-tax revenue" is income received from local public service fees, various fines and charges, from renting out municipal property and land and from interest on municipal investments, etc.

²⁷Termed "external resources" in financial and accounting documents, these are financial transfers that can take the form of grants-in aid, borrowing or loans.

²⁸*Financial autonomy* is achieved "when a local authority is able to raise the financial resources required through its own means, without petitioning or depending on other authorities at a higher or on the same level of government" (Dafflon and Perritaz 2002). In other words, financial autonomy is the "the capacity to raise revenue autonomously" (Guengant and Josselin 2005, p. 150).

²⁹*Budgetary autonomy* describes a decentralised public authority's capacity to "define, entirely independently, the types, quantity and quality of the services it intends to offer its residents" (Dafflon and Perritaz 2002).

- Local government (depending on the legislation in place in each state): octroi, property tax, vehicle tax, cinema and entertainment tax, advertising tax, etc.

However, despite the devolution of fiscal powers, the hope that decentralisation will help reduce states' tax burden remains remote (Bagchi and Chattopadhyay 2004, p. 5255), particularly in poor states like Uttar Pradesh. Compared to those in other states in India, municipalities in Uttar Pradesh have particularly low tax revenues and so continue to rely upon financial support from the state. When decentralisation was first introduced in 1997–98, a study by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) had shown that municipalities were able to generate a large proportion of their revenue locally, raising an average of nearly 82.78 % of their own resources (from municipal sources), with 17.23 % being received in the form of financial transfers (from the regional and central governments) (Mathur 1999). However, this finding did not apply to the few states that had already abolished octroi (tax levied on consumer items coming into the town), such as Uttar Pradesh, where 80.56 % of municipal revenue came from financial transfers. After octroi tax was scrapped in 1979, no replacement tax was introduced locally to offset the funding gap and municipalities instead became more reliant on financial support. **Octroi** was thus one of the most important traditional local taxes (Mathur et al. 2000, p. 39) and continued to account for between 60 and 80 % of all municipal revenue in Gujarat and Maharashtra in 2001 (Mathur and Thakur 2004).

However, 10 years of decentralisation later, a new NIPFP study revealed that, overall, there had been little improvement in the tax situation and that the financial autonomy of municipalities in Uttar Pradesh seemed instead to have decreased as 85.2 % of municipal revenue was found to come from external financial transfers (see Table 2.3).

When the majority of states started abolishing octroi,³⁰ this left a funding gap that needed to be filled by the introduction of new taxes (or new transfers, which some observers deemed insufficient,³¹ Bagchi 1999). When octroi was abolished, the **property tax** was supposed to take over as the main source of municipal revenue (Bagchi 2003). Its tax base is the annual amount received from the rent or sale of land and property; however, it has proved difficult to put in place as local

³⁰In 1993, the All India Motor Transport Congress initiated a wave of strikes to protest against octroi and submitted a memorandum to the Indian government calling for it to be abolished. This led to the creation of a government review committee, which produced a report in 1994 setting out recommendations for various ways of scrapping this tax, considered by its opponents to be “odious, vexatious and useless” (NIUA, 1998). In 2014, it was abolished throughout India, apart from in a new municipalities in Maharashtra; however, remnants of this tax can still be found in municipal budgets in some of the states (for instance, in the Punjab, where octroi was officially abolished in 2004, but where there is still an “octroi on electricity”).

³¹For Soumen Bagchi, the only way to effectively strengthen local governments is by reintroducing octroi tax (Bagchi 1999, p. 2637).

Table 2.3 Municipal revenue breakdown by state for 2007–2008

	Source of municipal revenue available in 2007–08	
	% Internal	% External
Andhra Pradesh	58.4	40.2
Assam	38.2	61.8
Bihar	14.6	85.4
Chhattisgarh	14.1	85.9
Goa	57.8	42.2
Gujarat	61.5	38.5
Haryana	33.5	66.5
Himachal Pradesh	47.8	42.2
Jammu and Kashmir	16.9	82.1
Jharkhand	20.2	79.8
Karnataka	34.2	65.8
Kerala	39.5	60.5
Madhya Pradesh	11.6	88.4
Maharashtra	76.1	23.9
Orissa	4.5	95.5
Punjab	89.1	10.9
Rajasthan	39.5	60.5
Tamil Nadu	38.4	61.6
<i>Uttar Pradesh</i>	<i>14.8</i>	<i>85.2</i>
Uttarakhand	21.8	78.2
West Bengal	51.7	48.3

Source Mathur (2011)

governments lack the required capacities, particularly in the poorest states. Thus, along with those in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, municipalities in Uttar Pradesh generate very few local resources and still appear to be highly dependent on financial transfers.

Overall, despite increased local taxation, virtually all states continue to support their municipalities to some extent. The imbalance between their high budgetary expenditure and low local incomes means that higher levels of government have no choice but to redistribute funding to the municipalities. The majority of municipalities remain unable to provide basic public services without state support. Thus, states have generally implemented the SFC recommendations to devolve more financial resources. The reports on implementation of these recommendations (Action Taken Report—ATR) tend to show the same trend, namely an increase in financial transfers from the regional state to local governments (however, these transfers vary in value and thus exacerbate regional differences). In Uttar Pradesh, the regional government has followed the recommendations of the three SFC by progressively increasing the amount of net state tax revenue it transfers to the municipalities. However, for some analysts, states are using this financial support to control municipal expenditure rather

than granting municipalities' greater fiscal authority, which would reduce their dependency on state transfers (Mathur 2001, p. 89).

2.3 Overview of the Four Small Towns

The four towns selected for the research are all located in the east of the state, or "*purvanchal*" (eastern province). This is a highly rural area where the relative mechanisation of agriculture has raised unemployment and which is considered to be one of the poorest regions in India in terms of development (World Bank 2002). Consequently, the small urban settlements in this region are vital to the development of the local economy and the decentralisation reform is an important driver of improvement. On a smaller geographic scale, the mapping study to identify the exact location of the towns enabled us to exclude outlying settlements (Cantonments or Outgrowths) and dissociate ourselves from the ongoing *New Economic Geography*-related debates on the growth of towns located next to larger towns and cities, which is not the focus of this research.

The towns selected each have around 20,000 inhabitants and are all undergoing a similar demographic transition, being still rural in some aspects yet already urban in others. According to the categories used by the Census of India, the towns fall between category IV (10,000–19,999 inhabitants) and category III (20,000–49,999 inhabitants). According to the Jal Nigam engineers, 20,000 inhabitants is a critical threshold that usually triggers an upgrade of the water supply infrastructure, which has to be extended to cover the growing surface area of the town.³² Furthermore, not only is this population size representative of the majority of towns in Uttar Pradesh (where 2/3 of urban settlements have fewer than 50,000 inhabitants), but it also differentiates this research from other studies into urban governance, which tend to focus on cities in category I. Finally, from a practical field work perspective, the relatively small size of each town meant it was possible to extensively cover the whole town area on foot and produce an accurate map of its layout.

The small towns selected are governed by the same municipal legislation (the Uttar Pradesh Municipality Act 1916, amended by the 74th Amendment) and all have very similar issues with their decentralised services. For example, based on the studies conducted, the number of households connected to the water supply network in all four towns did not exceed 50 % in 2009 (36 % in Kushinagar, 31 % in Chandauli, 18 % in Siddharthnagar and 45 % in Phulpur), raising doubts over the capacity of the reform to provide universal access to the service. Despite the reform, none of the towns has underground sewerage, there is very little public lighting (usually only on the main road), the roads are poorly maintained and solid waste collection is sporadic. These towns thus appear to provide a consistent base for comparison and for reviewing the technical aspects of the decentralisation process.

³²Interview with the Jal Nigam department in Lucknow in May 2008.

Table 2.4 Main features of the four towns studied

Town	Chandauli	Phulpur	Siddarthnagar	Kushinagar
Population in 2011	23,020	22,998	25,422	22,214
Population in 2001	20,093	20,986	21,741	17,982
Population in 1991	11,039	16,767	17,596	13,734
% SC	22 %	7 %	8.36 %	9 %
% OBC	51 %	60 %	51.7 %	62 %
% GENERAL	27 %	33 %	39.30 %	29 %
Median income	5,000–7,000 rupees	5,000–7,000 rupees	5,000–7,000 rupees	5,000–7,000 rupees
Status	Nagar panchayat	Nagar panchayat	Nagar palika parishad	Nagar panchayat
Number of wards ^a	15 wards	15 wards	25 wards	14 wards
Activities	• Market town • District capital	• Market town	• Market town • District capital	• Market town • Tourist town
Specific features	Town with the highest population growth in Uttar Pradesh between 1991 and 2001	• Near an industrial site (IFFCO) • Large Muslim population, estimated to be half of the town's population	• District included in the list of MCDs by the state of Uttar Pradesh • Urban area that covers two distinct sites • Nagar Palika status	• Maitreya tourist development project • Urban area that covers two distinct sites (Kushinagar and Kasia)

Sources Based on Electoral Commission data, compilations of census data and author's survey (created by Rémi de Bercegol)

^aThe "ward" is an urban administrative division, which defines a neighbourhood and, depending on the region, can also define an electoral constituency. They are usually defined at regional administration level by the District Magistrate, officially using population figures; however, in reality, geographic and social factors are also taken into account and the ward boundaries are reviewed at every election

Although very similar, each small town also has its own specific (cultural, institutional, economic or social) profile (see Table 2.4). Their essentially agricultural economic base is supplemented by a further distinctive feature (an administrative town, an industrial town, a tourist town, a market town). Their administrative status varies (Nagar Panchayat and Nagar Palika—2/3 of municipalities in Uttar Pradesh are Nagar Panchayats), ranging from a district capital to a state priority development area. Finally, they are all at different stages of development. The aim here was to introduce a number of variables that could explain potential differences in implementation of the reform.

2.3.1 *Chandauli Nagar Panchayat: A Small Town that is Now the District Capital*

Chandauli is around 40 km from the sacred city of Varanasi (1,435,113 inhabitants in 2011), near the Ganges to the north-west (6 km away) and 15 km from the city of Mughal Sarai (154,692 inhabitants in 2011), a major railway hub linking the neighbouring states of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh (see Fig. 2.4).

The town is located near the age-old Grand Trunk Road, an extremely busy route of over 2,500 km long that links Kabul in Afghanistan in the west with Chittagong

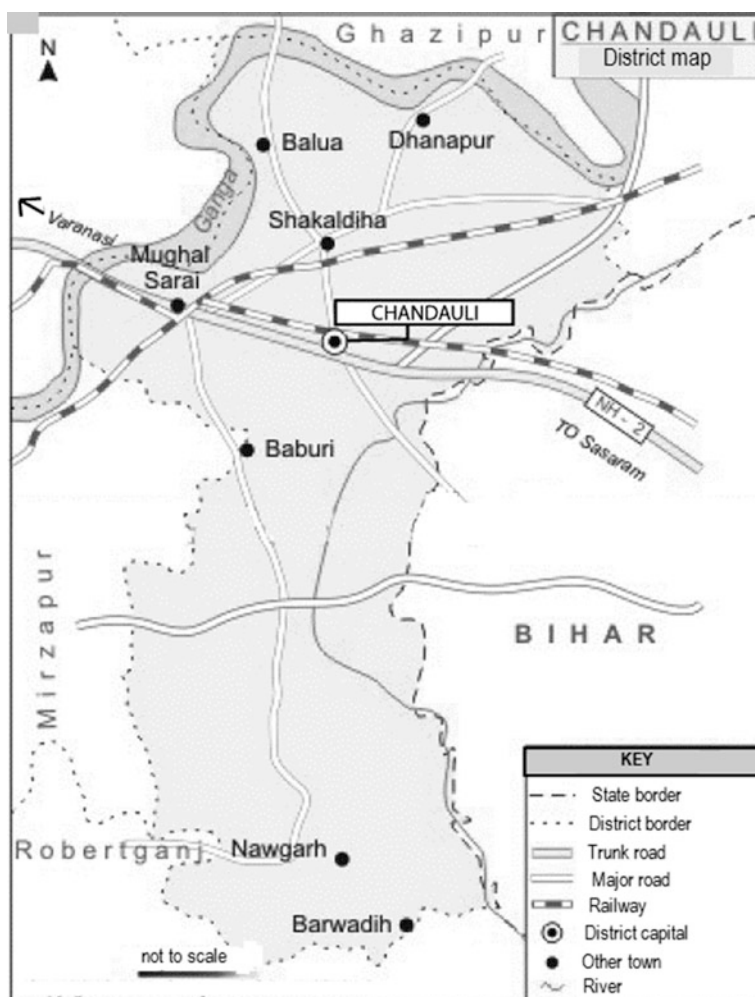


Fig. 2.4 Location of Chandauli. *Source* Maps of India, used with permission

in Bangladesh in the east. It also has rail links and there is a railway station within the town.

The town of Chandauli is not only an urban municipality, but it is also the administrative capital of the district of Chandauli, which was created in 1997 following the division of the former Varanasi district. There are, therefore, two types of administrative body within the town: that of the Nagar Panchayat, which manages the town of Chandauli but not the district; and that of the Zilla Panchayat, which manages the district's rural areas but plays no part in urban affairs. Chandauli is unique in that it is the only Nagar Panchayat in Uttar Pradesh to also be district capital, as district capital status is usually only reserved for "Nagar Palika Parishad" towns. The government restructured Varanasi district and created Chandauli district in 1997 in order to ease congestion and overcrowding in Varanasi by encouraging people to stay in rural areas.

Within Chandauli, there is a police station, court, hospital and the infrastructure required to manage the district. In addition, Kamala Pati Tripathi, a native of the town who was railway minister during Indira Gandhi's first term in government, facilitated the construction of a degree college, an intermediate college, a junior high school and a primary school, despite such educational establishments being rare for a town of this size. The town also has a range of amenities, from banks to petrol stations and a large number of private clinics; however, it does not have any hotels.

Due to its specific administrative status, the town employs a number of civil servants within various government departments. At the regional level, Chandauli is considered a market town as it is surrounded by several villages that have no real market place of their own. A multitude of small-scale entrepreneurs from Chandauli and its surrounding area have set up business in the town and helped drive the strong growth in economic activities that has increased the wealth of some of the town's population. However, most of Chandauli's inhabitants continue to work in the agricultural and small-scale business sectors and there is no large-scale industry in the town.

Urban development in Chandauli has led to the creation of "fingers" of built-up areas, most of which extend beyond the administrative boundaries of the town, particularly to the west along the Grand Trunk Road motorway, to which the old town centre is adjoined, and other regional roads. In contrast, a substantial part of the north of the town contains large cultivated fields (see Fig. 2.5).

There have been two main surges in the town's population growth: the first took place after 1971, the year the village obtained "town area" status; and the second was during the 1990s when it was named capital of the eponymous district. The creation of Chandauli district on 25 May 1997 saw the town of Chandauli achieve the highest 10-year population growth in the whole of Uttar Pradesh between 1991 and 2001 as it attracted people from the surrounding rural areas, achieving a growth rate of +82 %.

The town's population stood at 23,020 in 2011, 55 % of whom are male and 45 % are female. Chandauli has a young population (16 % of the population is under 6 years of age) and a low level of literacy (74 % for men and 55 % for

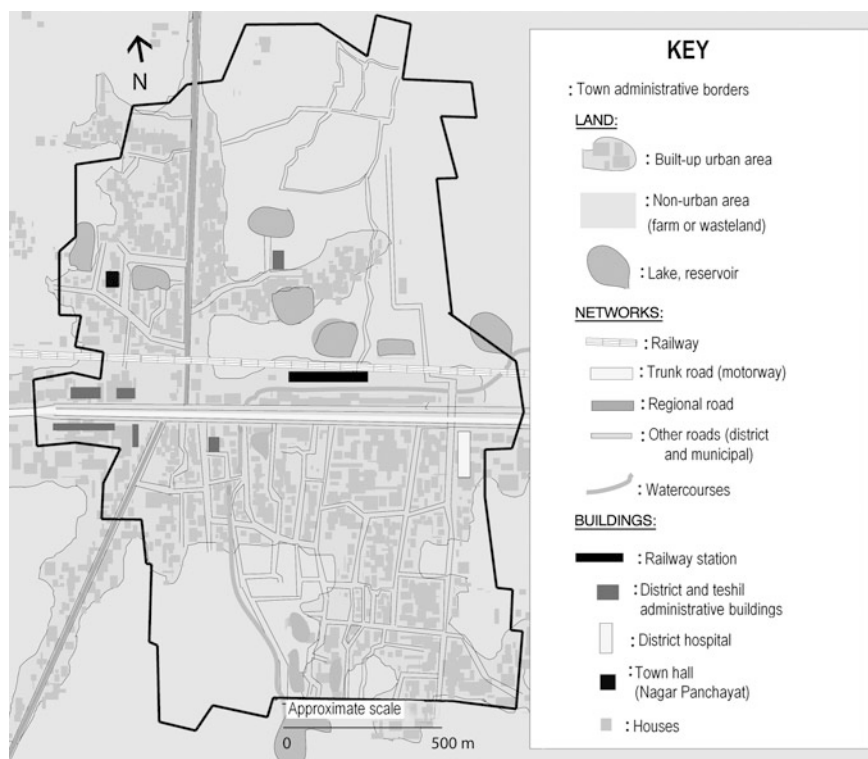


Fig. 2.5 Town of Chandauli. *Source* Based on available maps (Panchayat, Google Earth and personal observations), created by the author

women). During the research period (2008–2012), the population breakdown was as follows: 22.4 % Scheduled Castes; 50.95 % Other Backward Classes (OBC); and 26.64 % General (G). There were no Scheduled Tribes (ST) listed in any of the town’s fifteen wards.

With 22.4 % of the population being classed as Scheduled Castes (SC), Chandauli is the town with the largest proportion of lower castes out of all the small towns studied (in the other towns in the sample, this figure stands at around 10 %), being almost on a par with the “General” population (27 %). However, geographically, these two categories of population live in very distinct areas (see Fig. 2.6). The people classed as Scheduled Castes tend to live in ward no. 1 in the south of the town and in ward nos. 2 and 3 in the north-west. Meanwhile, the richer “General” population is mainly to be found in ward no. 7, one of the oldest parts of the town, in ward no. 11 near the district administrative buildings, and in ward nos. 12 and 13. The Other Backward Classes population live in the town’s other wards, particularly the older neighbourhoods that today make up the town’s shopping area (ward nos. 14, 15, 8 and 6 in the south of the town and ward no. 5 in the north, along the road).

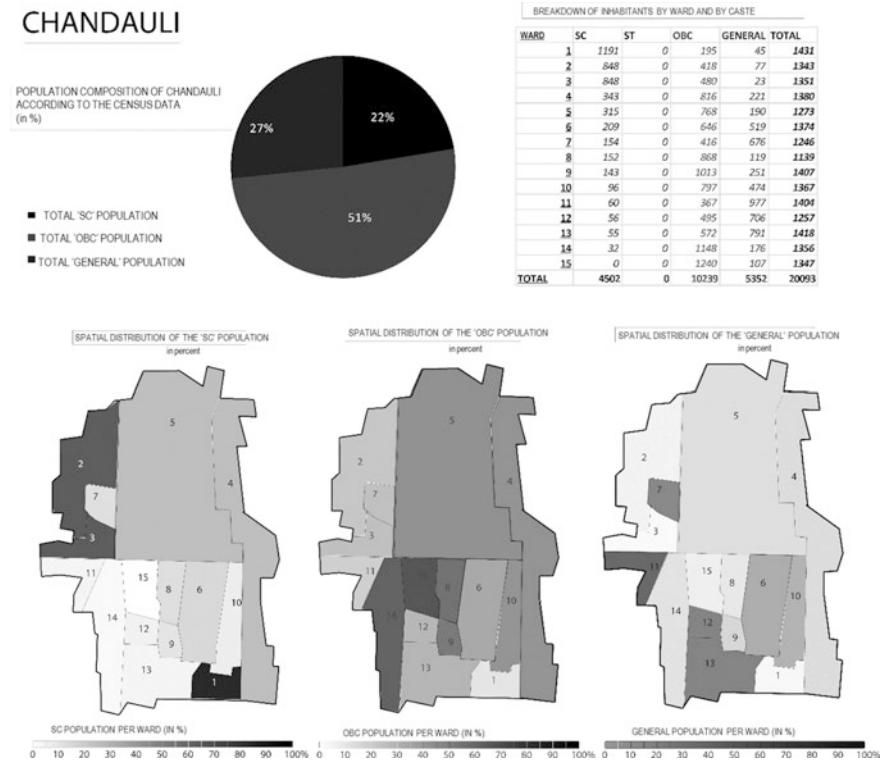


Fig. 2.6 Social geography of Chandauli. *Sources* Based on Electoral Commission data, created by the author

As in the other towns studied, household median income in Chandauli was estimated through the field work to be around 5,000–7,000 rupees per month; however, this amount varied quite considerably between the different socio-professional categories. The survey revealed a geographic correlation between the poor population groups and the Scheduled Castes (the poor are predominantly Scheduled Castes and most often live outside the town centre).

2.3.2 Phulpur Nagar Panchayat: An Industrial Town with a Large Muslim Population

The town of Phulpur is about 40 km from Allahabad (1,117,094 inhabitants in 2011) in the district of the same name, which was created in 2000 (following the creation of the state of Uttaranchal—a mountainous region that previously formed part of north-west Uttar Pradesh—that led to a reorganisation of the state into 70 districts).

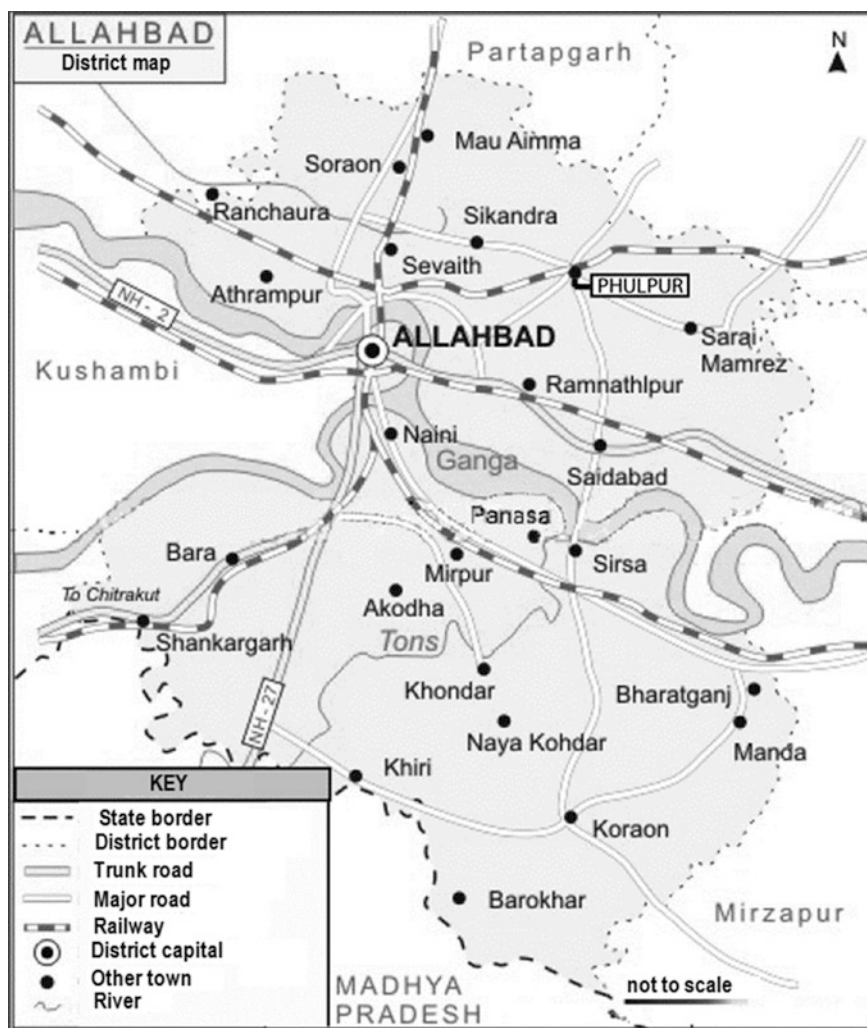


Fig. 2.7 Location of Phulpur. Source Maps of India, used with permission

Phulpur is connected to the rail network by the Allahabad–Jaunpur line and is easily accessible by the provincial Allahabad–Jaunpur motorway and the Phulpur–Handia road that links the town to the national NH2 motorway (see Fig. 2.7).

The literal meaning of “Phulpur” is “the town (“pur”) of flowers (“Phul”)” and it gets its name from the fact that it has a climate conducive to the blossoming of flowers. After an extremely dry season where temperatures can get up to 50 °C between November and June, the monsoon season between July and September brings with it humidity levels of 80 % and average rainfall of 900 mm. This major fluctuation causes all the flowers to bloom. “Phulpur” was officially created in 1926

and the town hall was built in 1975. The local government was dissolved in 1977 when a state of emergency was declared.³³ The town was managed by the Sub-Divisional-District Magistrate, a central civil servant appointed by the government, until 1996 when regular elections were reintroduced as part of the 74th Amendment.

As in the region's other small towns, Phulpur's economy predominantly relies on agriculture and small businesses. However, the town is particularly defined by the large industrial complex set-up on its outskirts by the Indian Farmers' Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO), one of India's largest agricultural fertiliser cooperatives (see Box 2.8). The Phulpur plant is one of six IFFCO sites. It was built in 1981 and mainly produces ammonia and urea.

Box 2.8: IFFCO (Indian Farmers' Fertiliser Cooperative Limited)

During the 1960s, India's cooperative sector distributed 70 % of all fertiliser used in the country but was not involved in its production. In order to gain independence from public and private suppliers and safeguard farmers' interests, a new institution was set up: IFFCO. When it was created in 1967, there were 57 cooperatives working with IFFCO. Today, there are 37,700 from across 28 states and territories within India. The cooperative is officially registered as a Multistate Cooperative Society whose main activities include producing and distributing fertiliser.

In 2007–08, IFFCO produced 6,847,000 tonnes of fertiliser, thus accounting for 20 % of the country's total nitrogenous fertiliser production and 25 % of total phosphate fertiliser production over the same period. Plant productivity for this period stood at 1,354 tonnes per person. IFFCO's turnover for the year was 12,163 million rupees. IFFCO's financial success has enabled it to invest in numerous other fertiliser and chemical production companies, both in India and abroad (Oman, Senegal and Egypt). More recently, IFFCO has diversified its activities and entered into other profitable sectors, such as insurance.

Apart from IFFCO, which is on the outskirts of the town, there are very few other activities or amenities and no other industry: the town has no bank, no school, no hotels and no restaurants. In addition, there are very few urban pockets outside the town's boundaries, except to the west, where the IFFCO plant is located in a non-built-up area. Within the town, there are areas of wasteland, which are usually flooded during the monsoons, as well as land used for urban farming (see Fig. 2.8).

³³After her election to the Lok Sabha was annulled due to election irregularities, the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi unilaterally declared a state of emergency from 1975 to 1977 and granted herself dictatorial powers.

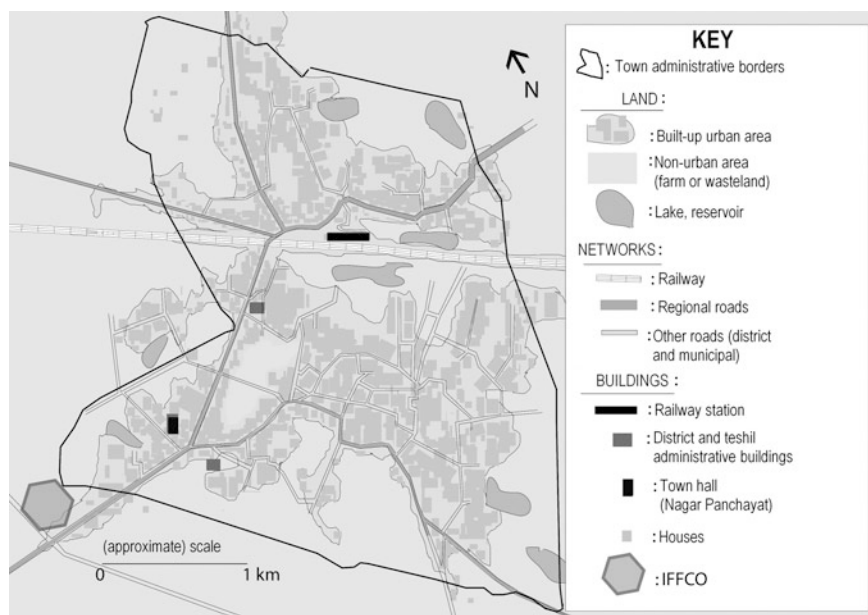


Fig. 2.8 Town of Phulpur. *Source* Based on available maps (JN, Panchayat, Google Earth and personal observation), created by the author

The town's population growth is intrinsically linked to the opening of the IFFCO plant and arrival of small-scale subcontractors. The town's population grew by 37.57 % between 1971 and 1981, rising from 8,572 to 11,793 inhabitants. After the IFFCO plant opened, the population then increased by 41.63 % to stand at 16,671 inhabitants in 1991. After slowing to a rate of 26.36 %, Phulpur had a population of around 21,000 inhabitants in 2001 and 22,998 in 2011.

Unlike the other towns in the sample, this town is unusual in that over half of its population is Muslim (52 % according to the Nagar Panchayat). Phulpur's population is 54 % male and 56 % female. It is also relatively young as 17 % are under 6 years of age. As in Chandauli, the literacy rate is low (60 %) and there is an uneven split between genders as male literacy stands at 70 %, but female literacy is only 49 %. According to the Nagar Panchayat, at the 2006 elections, 7 % of the population was classed as Scheduled Castes (SC), 0.05 % as Scheduled Tribes (ST), 58.42 % as Other Backward Classes (OBC) and 32 % as General (G). As it has Nagar Panchayat status, the town is divided into 15 administrative areas.

The spatial distribution of these castes shows that the largest population group, the OBC, predominantly live in the old town centre, in ward nos. 8, 11, 12, 14 and 15. In contrast, the Scheduled Castes' population has moved out of these areas into the town's outlying ward nos. 1, 2 and 3. The north of the town is mainly home to people considered Other Backward Classes, whereas the so-called General population groups mostly live in the south of the town (see Fig. 2.9).

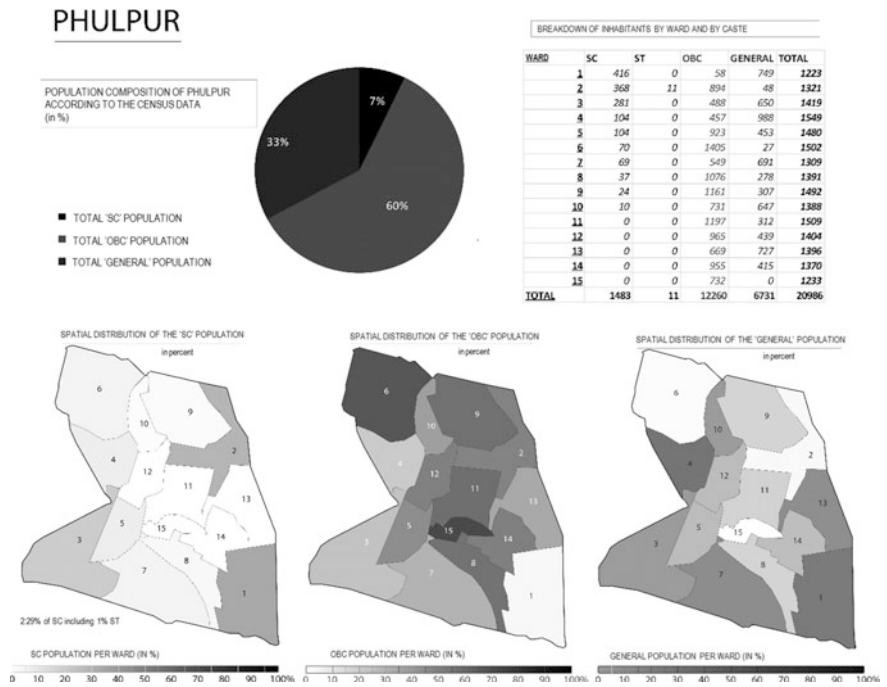


Fig. 2.9 Social geography of Phulpur. *Sources* Based on Electoral Commission data, created by the author

This mapping exercise does not enable us to determine which areas are predominantly Muslim as there is no information available on this at the ward level. However, the Nagar Panchayat estimates that nearly half of the town’s inhabitants are Muslims. Comparing our empirical observation of this religion within Phulpur, and of its mosques and madrasas, with the mapping of castes reveals no correlation, tending to suggest that the Muslim population is relatively spread out across the town, although there is perhaps a higher number living in ward nos. 4 and 5.

2.3.3 Siddarthenagar Palika Parishad: A Town with Privileged Status in a Poor Region

The town of Siddarthenagar is 76 km from Basti (114,651 inhabitants) and 74 km from Gorakhpur (692,519 inhabitants). The town has no direct link to the motorway, but the Gonda–Gorakhpur railway line does pass through the town (see Fig. 2.10).

The eponymous district of which it has been the capital since 1988 (when it was created) borders Nepal to the north and is extremely poor. It is one of the least

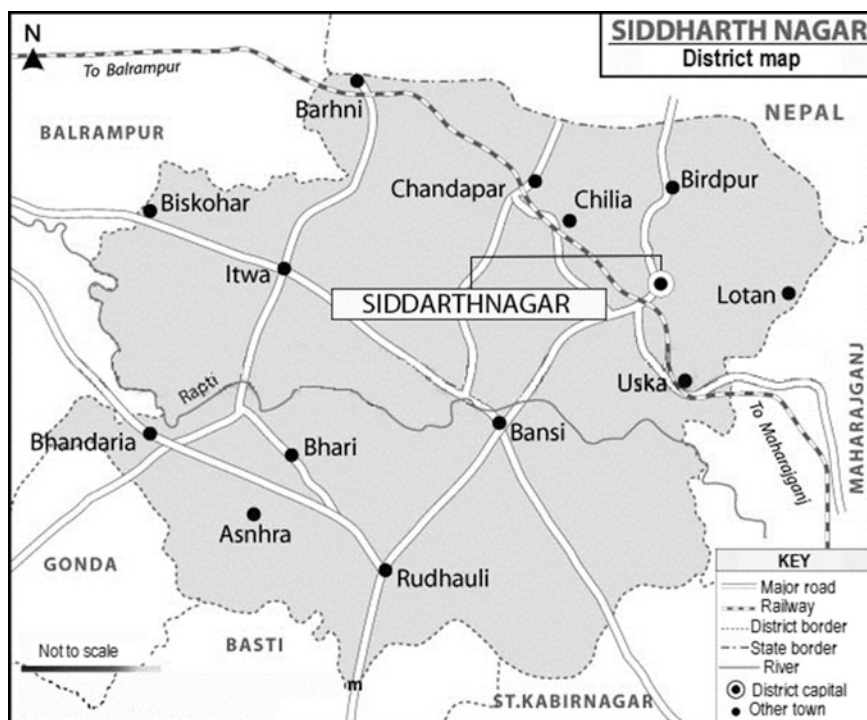


Fig. 2.10 Location of Siddharthnagar. Source Maps of India, used with permission

developed regions in Uttar Pradesh and, as such, is included in the list of 90 Minority Concentrated Districts in India (see Box 2.9).

Box 2.9: The List of 90 MCDs

A list of 90 Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs) was drawn up by the Ministry of Minority Affairs based on data collected from the 2001 Census. These are districts with the poorest access to basic public services and the lowest socio-economic indicators. In general, these districts are inhabited by non-Hindu groups (Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Sikh and Zoroastrian).

The central government has set up a *multi-sector development programme* specifically to reduce poverty in these districts. With a budget of 3,780 million rupees, the aim is to improve people's standard of living by improving the public education and health services, as well as other basic services, such as water supply, sanitation and roads.

The institutions and residents of "Siddharthanagar" also sometimes refer to the town as "Tetri Bazar" or "Naugarh" because it actually consists of two distinct

large villages located about 3.5 km apart and separated by the Jaumar River: Naugarh (5,654 inhabitants in 2001) and Tetri Bazar (16,117 inhabitants in 2001). There is no urban continuum linking these two parts of the town as heavy rains during the monsoon season always cause the Jaumar River to burst its banks and flood the surrounding area.

The original town centre is Naugarh. According to its inhabitants, king Shuddhodana, leader of the Sakya clan (and father of Siddhartha Gautama, the future Buddha) left his palace in Kapilavastu to meet nine other kings in what is now Naugarh to discuss the heavy floods that were paralysing the region. This is the event that gave Naugarh its name, which literally means “nine” (nau) “kingdoms” (garh). According to popular mythology, the Pandava brothers from the epic narrative “Mahabharata” came here to hide during the thirteenth year of their exile. Much later, during the British colonial era, the British set up a surveillance and administration post in the town (and one of the British army buildings remains standing to this day).

Over time, a market called “Tetri Bazar” established itself next to Naugarh and has become an important trading area for the surrounding region. Although this market town has developed more recently than Naugarh, it has grown more quickly and at an opportune time. Following India’s green revolution, the increase in agricultural production and harvests meant there was a need for a suitable market place to be available all year round. However, Naugarh often experiences flooding during the monsoon season, whereas Tetri Bazar is on slightly higher ground. The population of Tetri Bazar has steadily increased and it was awarded Town Area Committee status in 1978, independently of Naugarh where population growth has slowed.

Thus, Naugarh and Tetri Bazar were originally two very different towns. In 1989, Siddharthnagar district was created. Naugarh and Tetri Bazar were thus brought together under the same administrative body: Siddharthnagar Nagar Palika Parishad, which became the capital of the new district. The new town was named “Siddharthnagar”, which literally translates as the “town” (nagar) of “Siddharth”, in reference to the Buddha’s early years, until he left his kingdom at the age of 29 and discovered Nirvana. Today, the town is known by all three names, which can sometimes cause confusion. For instance, Siddharthnagar train station is in Tetri Bazar but the railway company has it listed as Naugarh station. For the purposes of the research, the town as a whole is referred to as Siddharthnagar; the northern, more outlying yet oldest part, is referred to as Naugarh; and the administrative and commercial centre of Siddharthnagar is Tetri Bazar. This distinction is important as the water supply network has been installed in two distinct parts: one for the population of Tetri Bazar and the other for the inhabitants of Naugarh (see Fig. 2.11).

Most urban development is taking place to the east of the town, where there are a number of nearby villages and which is also where the district administrative buildings are located (notably a prison), midway between the town and its outlying areas. As it is in a highly rural district, most of Siddharthnagar’s economic activities are linked to the agricultural sector and the town provides an important marketplace

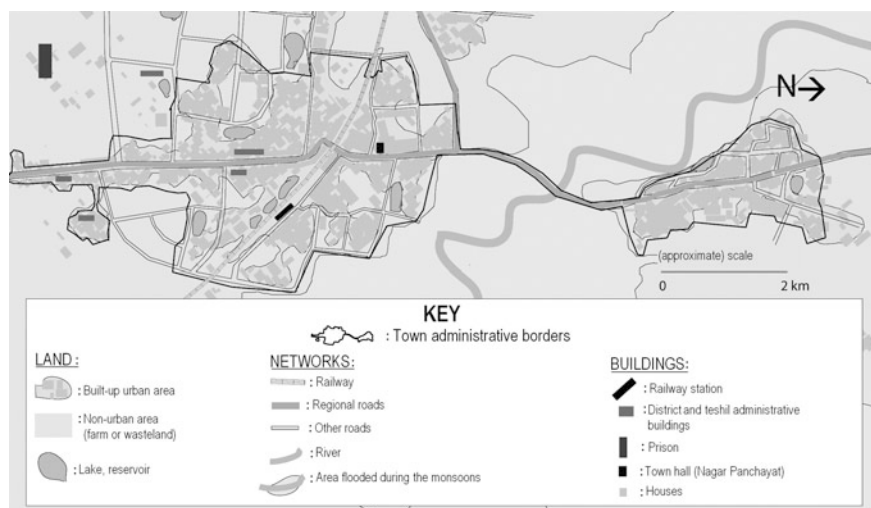


Fig. 2.11 Map of Siddarthnagar. *Source* Based on available maps (JN, Panchayat, Google Earth and personal observation), created by the author

for local farmers. However, there is no urban agriculture inside the town; all farmland is located outside the town boundaries. Most non-built-up areas are tracts of wasteland that are usually flooded during the monsoons. There are also no major industries operating in the town as there are in Phulpur.

The town had a population of 21,915 inhabitants in 2001 and 25,422 in 2011. This population is 53 % male and 47 % female and 18 % is under 6 years of age. The literacy rate in Siddarthnagar is 62 % (71 % for men, 53 % for women). During the research period, 8.36 % of the population was classed as Scheduled Castes (SC), 51.7 % as Other Backward Classes (OBC), 39.30 % as General and there were no identified Scheduled Tribes (ST).

As in Phulpur, the spatial distribution of these castes (see Fig. 2.12) shows that the Scheduled Castes (SC) population groups predominantly live on the outskirts of the town, in ward nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, whereas the people classed as OBC are mainly to be found in the old town areas of Naugarh and Tetri Bazar. Observation carried out in ward nos. 20, 15 and 24, home to a mainly Other Backward Classes' population, revealed that a high number of Muslims also live in these areas. In Tetri Bazar, people from the General population group have tended to congregate in ward nos. 16 and 12, but they are also to be found in all other wards of the town. However, there are very few people classed as General population in Naugarh and they mostly live in ward nos. 11 and 6, which border the fields that they own.

Finally, unlike the other towns in the sample, which have Nagar Panchayat status, Siddarthnagar is a Nagar Palika Parishad. Consequently, the town is not divided into fifteen wards like the other towns, but instead into a total of 25 wards split into two groups: those in Naugarh (7 wards) and those in Tetri Bazar (18 wards). This different status also has financial implications, which are covered in the final chapter.

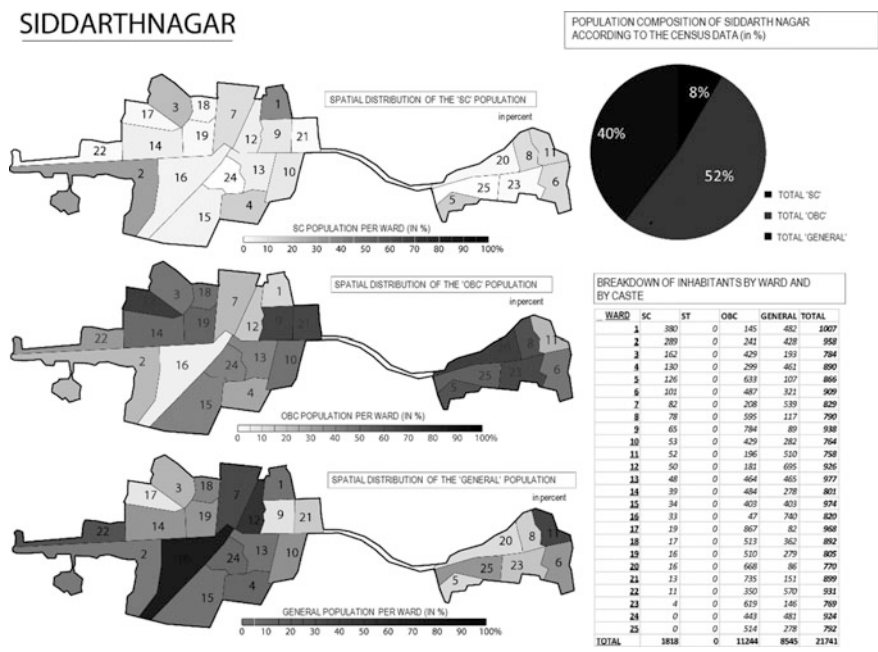


Fig. 2.12 Social geography of Siddarthnagar. Sources Based on Electoral Commission data, created by the author

2.3.4 Kushinagar Nagar Panchayat: A Tourist Town with Great Development Potential

The town of Kushinagar is situated in the north-east of Uttar Pradesh, in the district of the same name. However, the district capital is the neighbouring town of Padrauna (49,723 inhabitants), 35 km further north (see Fig. 2.13).

As with Siddarthnagar, the town consists of two distinct areas located 3 km apart. The first, and largest, area is commonly known as “Kasia” and is the administrative and commercial centre of the town. The second, much smaller, area is the town’s cultural and tourist centre, called “Kushinagar”, or the “place of joy”, due to its links to Buddhism (see Fig. 2.14).

Although mention of Kushinagar can be found in the epic poem Ramayana (as being the town of Kusa, son of the legendary Rama, 7th avatar of the Hindu supreme god Vishnu), the town is above all a Buddhist pilgrimage site. In the fifth century B.C., the small village of Kushinagar was part of the Mallas kingdom. It was here that Gautama Buddha gave his last sermon in 483 B.C. before attaining



Fig. 2.13 Location of Kushinagar

“*parinirvana*” (the “final nirvana”). In his travelogue, the Chinese monk Fa Hien³⁴ described “Kushinara” as “a simple village with bamboo houses in the middle of the jungle”. Following Buddha’s death, Kushinagar expanded to cover different sites: the cremation site in the east; the commemoration site to the west, where there is a large Stupa; and the site of the village itself in the north. Kushinagar flourished

³⁴Fa Hien (337–422) was a Chinese Buddhist monk who travelled through Nepal, India and Sri Lanka between 399 and 412 to acquire original Buddhist texts. He described his journey in *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms, Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of his Travels in India and Ceylon in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline*.



Fig. 2.14 Town of Kushinagar. *Source* Based on available maps (JN, Maitreya Project Master Plan, Google Earth and personal observation), and created by the author

under the reign of Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (273–262 B.C.), when numerous *stupas*³⁵ and *viharas*³⁶ were built and renovated. After this relatively golden era, Kushinagar slowly fell into oblivion and its religious cremation and commemoration sites disappeared after a succession of Mughal invasions in the twelfth century. Kushinagar only returned to prominence in the late nineteenth century, following archaeological excavations in 1876 that once more exposed the main sites and helped Kushinagar gradually regain its status as an important Buddhist pilgrimage town (see Box 2.10).

³⁵A *stupa* (which is Sanskrit for “heap”) is a mound-like stone structure that can vary in size and which contains Buddhist relics.

³⁶*Vihara* is the Sanskrit term for an Indian Buddhist monastery and means “a secluded place in which to walk”.

Box 2.10: Buddhist Pilgrimage Towns in India, International Tourist Sites

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are home to numerous ancient Buddhist sites. Some of these sites have now become important pilgrimage destinations.

The most well-known site remains Bodh Gaya in Bihar where, according to legend, Siddhartha Gautama achieved “enlightenment” (from the Sanskrit word “*bodhi*”, or “awakening”) following several months of meditation. Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh is where Buddha delivered his first teachings to his disciples on achieving Nirvana. As it is only a few kilometres from Varanasi, Sarnath has become a popular tourist destination, even if tourists spend only a few hours there visiting the historical monuments and museum. Kushinagar is where Siddhartha Gautama died and was cremated. According to the legend, he was 80 years old when he died, lying on his right side and smiling (see the graphic document below); he is deemed to have achieved “*nirvana*” (i.e. “extinction” and, by extension, “peace” then “liberation”) and thus to have become the “Buddha”. Consequently, Kushinagar, the “place of joy”, has become an important pilgrimage destination, but its tourist potential remains underdeveloped compared to that of Sarnath and Bodh Gaya, which have been receiving government support for a number of years now to help them improve their infrastructure and promote international tourism.

Ever since the 1980s, the government of Uttar Pradesh has been endeavouring to develop the tourist potential of this religious (Buddhist), cultural (archaeological) and geographically important site (as it is also a stop-off point on the new motorway between Lucknow and Patna, the National Highway 28). The Indian government has also now got involved in the town’s tourist development through its Maitreya megaproject, an ambitious American Indian development plan. The project has been initiated by neo-Buddhist associations in the United States, who want to turn Kushinagar into a must-see religious and cultural destination by developing a religious tourist complex several hectares in size to the south of the town. The aim is to encourage pilgrims to stay longer than 2 days (the maximum duration of their stay at the moment) and attract international tourism. In addition to constructing new hotels, there are also plans to build an airport (work on which officially started in January 2014), rail and motorway infrastructure (which was completed in 2012). If it is to develop its tourist activities, Kushinagar needs to have a high standard of urban infrastructure. Thus, not only does the town receive grants from the central and regional governments in India, but it also receives aid from foreign donors, such as an American Buddhist organisation and the government of Japan. However, project progress has been hampered by difficulties procuring the necessary land.³⁷

³⁷The provision of financial compensation to the 700 families who have seen their land expropriated has become a high-profile political issue that has been reported in national media and taken up by Indian activists, particularly Medha Patkar’s National Alliance for People’s Movement,

Although Kushinagar receives all the media attention due to its ashrams, temples and hotels, it is still only a tourist offshoot of Kasia, the town centre proper (where most of the people live and which serves as a market place for the surrounding villages). The town as a whole has only been officially known as “Kushinagar” since the 1991 census, before which it was referred to as Kasia. The government changed the town’s name in order to help the entire town and region benefit from the tourist boom of the Kushinagar site. In 1996, after the first elections in Kushinagar, the name of the district was also changed, from Deoria to Kushinagar; however, the medium-sized town of Padrauna was retained as district capital.

Kasia, the town centre, serves as a market place for farmers from neighbouring villages, who come to sell their crops.³⁸ There are many small businesses in the town, as well as a number of small-scale industries, such as sawmills, rice and wheat mills. Overall, the town is like any other typical small town, but is defined by its adjoining tourist area in which there are several Buddhist temples, a government-run museum, three luxury hotels and a number of restaurants and shops.

Between 1981 and 2011, the town’s population doubled, rising from 11,500 to 22,214 inhabitants. In line with the other towns in the sample, the population is 52 % male and 48 % female, 15 % of whom are under 6 years of age, and the literacy rate stands at 62 % (70 % for men and 54 % for women). The population breakdown is as follows: 9.06 % Scheduled Castes (SC); 61.53 % Other Backward Classes (OBC); 29.4 % General (G); and there are no Scheduled Tribes (ST). As Kushinagar has a slightly smaller population than the other towns, it is divided into 14 wards (instead of the 15 seen in the other Nagar Panchayats of Phulpur and Chandauli) (see Fig. 2.15).

Nearly two-thirds of the people in Kushinagar are classed as Other Backward Classes and they mainly live in the older areas and commercial districts of Kasia, particularly along the main shopping streets. The Scheduled Castes population groups live further out, in ward no. 2 to the north-west and in ward no. 4 in the tourist area; a large number also live in the older part of Kasia, near the shopping district, in ward nos. 1 and 3. The General population groups are mainly to be found in the north of Kasia, in wards with very few lower caste residents. In the Kushinagar area, the proportion of General, Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes population groups appears to be much more mixed.

As in the other towns, the geographic distribution of household income predominantly corresponds to the spatial distribution of the three categories of caste. However, there are few notable exceptions with some households in the Other Backward Classes category appearing particularly well off, having incomes

(Footnote 37 continued)

better known for its opposition to the Narmada dam. The unique (geographic, economic and institutional) nature of this mega-project, which brings together local and international civil society, public and private stakeholders, includes a number of aspects potentially of interest to researchers but which are not covered here.

³⁸The main crop grown is sugar cane (there is a government-owned sugar cane processing factory in the neighbouring town of Padrauna).

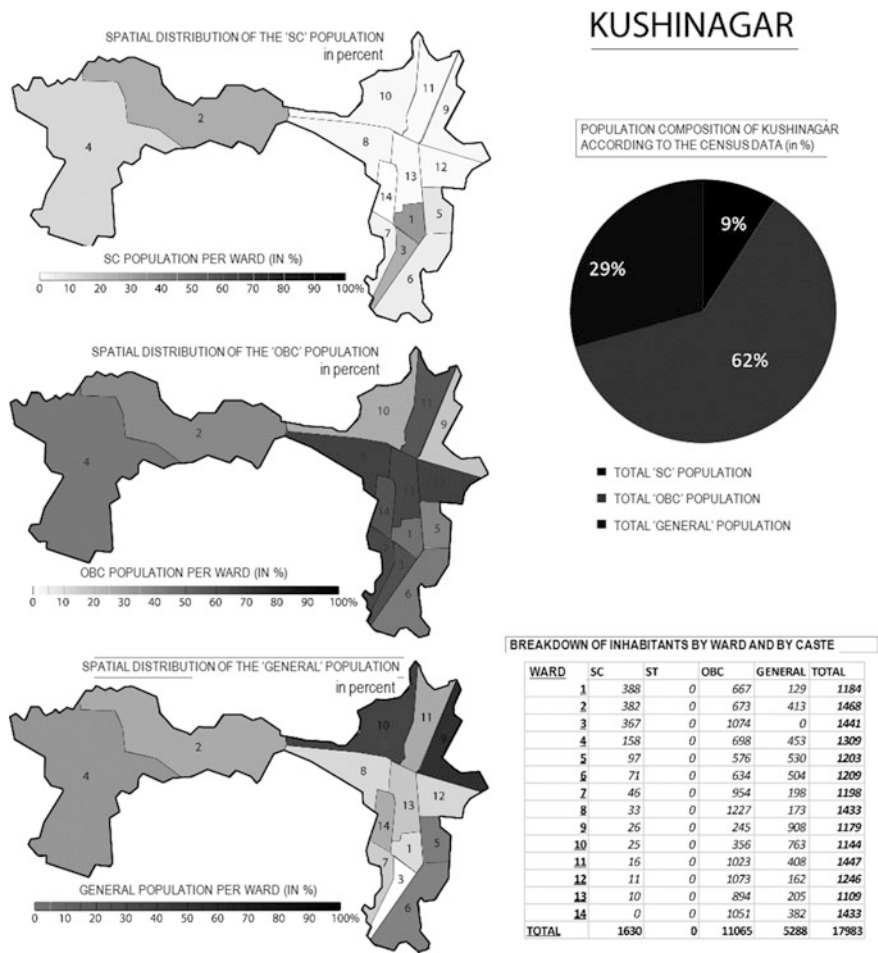


Fig. 2.15 Social geography of Kushinagar. *Sources* Based on Electoral Commission data, created by the author

sometimes in excess of 30,000 rupees in a town where the average for the majority of the population is between 5,000 and 7000 rupees per month.

2.4 Conclusion

The empirical difficulties encountered in the research are related to the specific features of the region and study areas selected, namely small towns in the east of Uttar Pradesh. As such, this backdrop provides a particularly appropriate

framework for reflexive analysis of the decentralisation process and for observing the changes triggered by these reforms.

On an institutional level, the specific features of Uttar Pradesh make practical implementation of the decentralisation reform particularly complicated. However, the eastern region of the state is an extremely poor area that has high hopes of the social and economic improvements promised by the reforms. Although small towns lack facilities and are experiencing sustained population growth, they can nonetheless have a major impact on driving and revitalising development in the surrounding areas of this predominantly rural region. It therefore appears worthwhile to study these small towns in more detail, not only to assess the tangible impacts of decentralisation, but also to review the accompanying reorganisation of power within the towns' political economy. In this regard, the rise to power of caste-based parties such as the BSP in Uttar Pradesh during the research period, combined with the consolidation of local elections, places renewed attention on political democracy as experienced in small municipalities.

In keeping with this reasoned choice, it seemed appropriate to select four small towns with enough similarities to enable comparison (same population size, in the same region, with the same lack of development) and with enough differences (notably as regards their economic and administrative activities) to enable us to identify where processes potentially vary between specific towns and to isolate explanatory factors. The aim of comparing the four small towns of Kushinagar, Chandauli, Siddharthnagar and Phulpur was not only to gain an overview of the specific situation in small towns in Uttar Pradesh, but also and above all to build a clear understanding of the political, technical and financial restructuring taking place as a result of decentralisation in towns for which the reform was not directly intended.

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