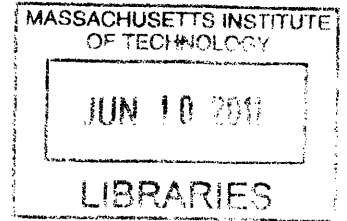**DECENTRALIZING URBANIZATION**
Harnessing the Potential of Small Cities in India

By

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Bachelor of Architecture
Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology
Ahmedabad, 2006

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTERS OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES
AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

JUNE 2011

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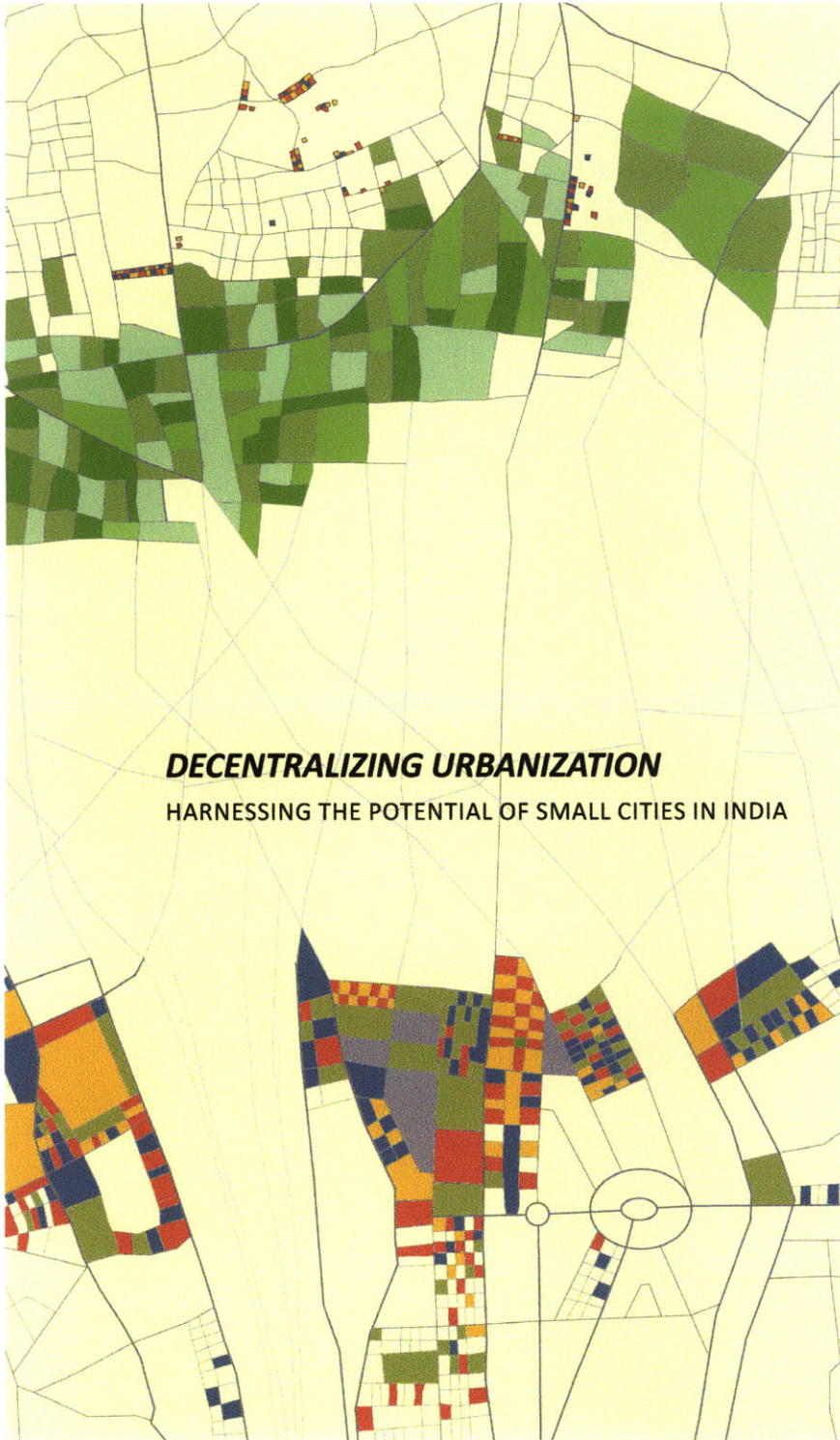
DECENTRALIZING URBANIZATION
HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF SMALL CITIES IN INDIA

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DECENTRALIZING   URBANIZATION

HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF SMALL CITIES IN INDIA

ABSTRACT

Perceived as symbols of national development or degeneration, megacities continue to dominate discourse and action related to urbanization, particularly in developing countries like India. Simultaneously, a large portion of urbanized space continues to be described by small and medium sized cities residing in between the rural hinterland and hyper urbanism. These cities are characterized by an intermediate and decentralized form of urbanism, often haphazard and contrasting substantially with their larger counterparts and smaller villages. Because of their size and location, small cities form a vital link within the hierarchy of settlements and are important for the diffusion of development, technology, knowledge and migration between the rural and the urban.

Economic liberalization in India has been fostering new social and political mindsets which have translated into policy, governance, investment and concomitantly, urbanization strategies. An important physical manifestation is the spawning of large scale regional and national infrastructure projects-ambitious mega highways, waterways, special investment zones and industrial corridors which transect the hinterland, surround and pass through urban agglomerations and encounter many small cities along the way. Seen as catalysts of transformation befitting an emerging 'superpower', these endeavors are predicted to have contrasting effects ranging from increased connectivity, economic opportunities and growth to loss of quality of life, environmental pollution and social inequality. Regardless of the nature of consequences, small cities are set to be affected in unprecedented ways. The thesis reassesses the potential and future of small cities within this scenario and proposes strategies which utilize the proximity of large infrastructure projects to spawn interventions based on the specific conditions of the city. The historic city of Navsari, Gujarat, located along the western rail corridor and the proposed Delhi Mumbai Industrial corridor (DMIC) has been studied in greater detail to understand the effects of the mega scheme and propose interventions for a sustainable future for the city.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

As a student of architecture in Ahmedabad, small towns offered a con-
venient and inexpensive getaway from the stress and mayhem of aca-
demic life. An overnight bus or train ride would transport us to a very
different urban setting. Each town had a particular attraction, an old
temple, a fair, a sacred lake, a step well, an interesting medieval hous-
ing typology. It would take us about two days to see the town, to walk
its length and breadth and explore its historic, touristic and urban as-
sets. The environment was always laid back, the people friendly albeit
complacent. Some towns had a stronger appeal and we would return
to them, and in two trips develop a familiarity.

In the course of research on second tier cities in India at MIT, which
are being predicted as the next wave of urbanization, an interest was
sparked in the still smaller cities that I had known quite well. Probing
into the critiques and opportunities surrounding liberalization in India
lead to the realization that small cities are not very far behind, large
scale regional and national infrastructure being spawned with great
enthusiasm is causing physical and psychological transformations in
these sedate places.

The thesis stems from an interest in small scale urbanism within the
context of hyper development activity in India. It is a study of small
cities, their qualities, functions, potentials and futures and argues that
they are set to be affected in unprecedented ways within the context
of economic liberalization and the heightened infrastructural activity
and investment associated with it. It becomes critical to understand
small cities, not only to alleviate their derelict condition, but in order
to harness their latent potential in creating a balanced urban sphere
within the country.

STRUCTURE

The thesis engages at two levels, it explores, understands and captures the relevant theories surrounding small scale urbanism globally, and in relation to broader mega city forces. At another level, the thesis studies the ground realities of small cities, which are often contrasting from the theories and policies surrounding them. It is organized in three chapters:

The first chapter explores the question of size as related to urban settlements and proceeds to locate small cities within a system of settlements through various theories, ranging from optimum size to the network city paradigm, understanding the trends which caused a revival of interest in both the western context and in the developing world. It then makes a case for small cities, outlining their traditional significance and contemporary potential. The policies and governance strategies associated with small cities, particularly in the global south have been reviewed briefly to understand why they have failed to catalyze changes despite prolonged efforts.

Chapter two offers an understanding of the ground realities of small cities in India. It begins by tracing the urbanization process in India from the colonial period to the present, through the lens of small scale urbanism, identifying the causal factors for the current patterns and conditions of small cities.

It then elucidates the qualities of small cities in India, the lifestyles, economies, morphologies and cultures associated with them. The chapter concludes by resituating small cities within the conditions posed by economic liberalization. The region emerges as an important geographical and political scale, achieving coherence through the framework of pervasive infrastructural development, while simultaneously containing a diversity of settlements, economic activities and lifestyles.

The last chapter applies the understanding of the theories and realities of small cities in proposing interventions for Navsari, Gujarat, located within the Mumbai-Ahmedabad region which falls at the confluence of many national infrastructure and investment schemes. One of the propositions has been developed as a project for the city, based on its particular conditions and resources and its location within the larger region.

A CASE FOR SMALL CITIES

Sagarika Suri
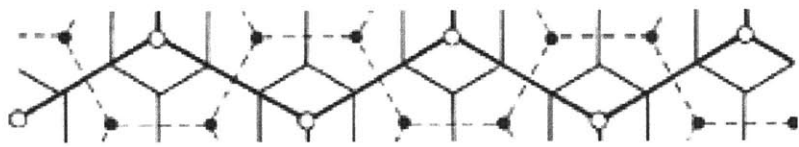
1 A CASE FOR SMALL CITIES

The increasing number of endlessly expanding mega cities dominates much of the discourse on urbanization. These cities are highly populated, extremely dense, vibrant and contested, making them exciting, visible, imperative parts of the urban sphere. Yet they account for a very small share of the world's total urban population: only 7% live in cities with more than 10 million people, 14% in cities with more than 5 million, while around 56% of the world's urban population lives in small and medium sized cities with fewer than 500,000 people.[1] These centers are not as visible as the mega cities but provide a majority of the urban population and much of the rural population of the world with amenities and services. However there is very little understanding of small cities, particularly from the perspective of urban study and design. It is often easier to define and comprehend the extremes in a settlement hierarchy; hence the mega city and the village are more definitively approached in terms of strategy, policy and governance, while the small-intermediate city remains elusive.

An important aspect of the intermediate city is its relative size, both in terms of population and physical dimension, as compared to the mega city and the villages in their territories. This section of the thesis analyses the urban sphere as related to size of cities. It makes a case for small-intermediate cities and deduces inferences that can guide the future of small cities. In doing so, it tries to answer the following questions:

1. What does size imply for the nature, function and potential of small cities?
2. Does an increase in size imply an improvement in quality of life?
3. Is the only path to development of cities one of physical growth?
4. How do lifestyles differ in smaller cities?
5. Is there a most effective urban size in terms of production and consumption?

1 UIA CIEMS, *Intermediate Cities and World Urbanization*, (Llieda: UIA CIEMS 1999), 42.

1.1 THE QUESTION OF SIZE

Plato was fixated with the idea of an optimum city size-a city with 5040 men (plus women, children and slaves).[2] He believed that city size was absolutely imperative for economic welfare, security and social behavior, and even postulated policy and governance guidelines to regulate the reproduction of the population within the city state. Even though the number itself seems quizzical, Plato stresses a relationship between the size (in terms of population) of a city and the nature of its society, lifestyle and security. The ultimate aim of his proposed size was to achieve what he perceived to be as an 'ideal society.'

Theoretical work on city size has continued to be carried out with great vigor. First at the turn of the 19th century, particularly in the context of industrialized European countries, where the congestion and social problems associated with the industrial city became a major issue with regards to urbanization, and then in the 1960s and 70s due to the highly polarized distribution of development and wealth and the rising phenomenon of primate cities in the post-colonial, developing world.

That there are benefits to agglomeration, manifest in the cultural, social and economic efficiency of cities, has come to be an accepted fact. However the difficulties associated with the ever growing city are also marked and manifold. In addition perceptions regarding benefits and problems in cities tend to be personal and cultural. The theories discussed in this section attempt to understand the size of cities as related to economics, physical environment and perceptions of quality of life.

2   Plato B. Jowett, "Plato on population and the State," *Population and Development Review* 12 (Dec. 1986):781, http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.mit.edu/stable/1973435.

1.1.1 ECONOMIC THEORY

Optimum City Size

The theory of an 'Optimal city size' postulated that beyond a certain size, the advantages associated with agglomeration start to diminish. It claimed city size to be the fundamental determinant affecting the costs and benefits associated with cities. Criticisms of this theory can be observed empirically in the emergent pattern of urbanization, where large cities continue to grow larger, even after having achieved the said optimum size. Even the slowing rate of urban population growth observable in some developing countries today is common to all cities and not necessarily dependent on the physical size of the city. Since the 1970s it has become accepted that the prescription of a normative size for cities is problematic, as it does not take into account the particularities of function, culture, and location within an urban system. It states that the only determinant for urban location advantage is size and does not take into account increasing communication and transport networks and the availability and transfer of information and knowledge that describe the urban sphere today.

Central Place Theory

The central place theory reacts to the one-dimensional approach of the optimal size theory by bringing function into the equation. It proposes a relationship between the function of a city and its size and in doing so prescribes a hierarchical urban system where the higher order cities, which are by definition larger, produce higher order goods and services, the order of service reducing with decrease in physical size. The differences in city size in this system can be interpreted as the compensation between the advantages of agglomeration on the one hand and diseconomies of congestion on the other. It considers a default equilibrium condition within the system of settlements, where all the costs and benefits are equalized in this way. As a result the theory only holds true in a neutral urban field, not accounting for
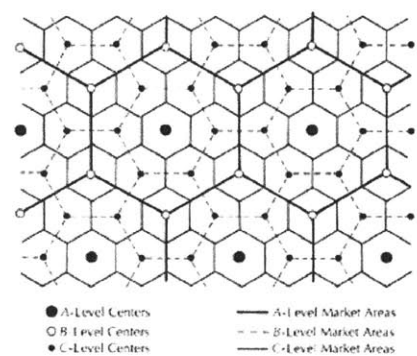

Fig. 1 Diagram of Christaller's Central Place System.
Source: www.nap.edu

variation inducing factors like culture, preference, history and more recently technology. [3]

Networked City Paradigm

The networked city paradigm starts with negating the idea of a normative size and takes into consideration the spatial context within which cities operate as an important factor determining efficiency, growth and function. The relationships emerging from proximity with other centers in the territory as well as regional, national and international networks define the city and concurrently its size. It explains how the presence of a higher order function or the integration within the network of urban systems are important factors for explaining the size of cities, a corollary to this is that small cities are also able to achieve economies of scale if they have a network advantage.

1.1.2 QUALITATIVE THEORY

Most of the formal theories and arguments related to the implication of size of cities discussed earlier tend to be economic. There are however, theories that address the more intangible aspect of the effect of size, such as on the perception of cities and the quality of life. Ebenezer Howard's proposal for a ring of small cities around a large city was based on the benefits of a smaller size, more as a contrast to the congestion rampant in the large industrial cities. It was also related to a preference for contact with the countryside. Similarly Patrick Geddes favored smaller cities because of the perceived and physical proximity to nature, which he related to wellbeing and health. He propagated that the town planning movement maintain a contact with the rural

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3   Roberta Capello and Roberta Camagni, "Beyond Optimum City Size: An evaluation of Alternative Urban Growth Patterns," *Urban Studies 37* (August 1999): 1483, http://usj.sagepub.com/content/37/9/1479

world around cities, encouraging regional survey and regional services to bring about a reunion of the town and the country. He went on to make a moral argument in favor of small cities, where children can *"escape the deterioration inevitable to townlings."*[4] Though extreme, this argument can be seen in conjunction with the increasing rate of crime, social discrimination and unrest associated with larger cities and how city size affects the qualitative aspects of urban life.

City effect and Urban Overload-Agglomeration Economies and Diseconomies

The economic effects of city size are more easily quantifiable than the environmental and social effects, which tend to be subjective, depending for instance on how traditional or modern a society is. In addition these factors do not exist in isolation, but are often experienced simultaneously and the interactions between the various economic, physical and social factors in a city produce both negative and positive effects; Capello and Camagni label these as *"City Effects"* and *"Urban overloads"* respectively.[5] Through their research and empirical studies they found that the relative size of the city, its function and the level of network integration within the settlement system, affects the degree of advantages and disadvantages. In a successful or efficient city, the advantages associated with the particular conditions of a city outweigh the disadvantages.

The economic development in a city is usually characterized by negative effects on the physical environment (for example environmental degradation and pollution arising from production related activities). However it is hard to arrive at an ideal condition as these negative externalities cannot be seen as absolute. For instance, density and concentration as found in mega cities enables efficiency with regards

Fig. 2 Poster advertising the Welwyn Garden City, England founded in 1920
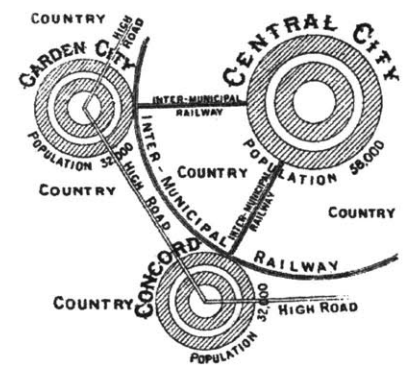Source: www.myoops.org

Fig. 3 Ebenezer Howard's Garden City diagram.
Source: Wikipedia

4   Patrick Geddes, *Patrick Geddes in India* (London: L. Humphries, 1947), 30
5   Capello and Camagni, *Beyond Optimum City Size,* 1479-1496.

to the use of resources, while simultaneously creating conditions of excessive pollution and environmental degradation; the interaction of economic and social environments give rise to positive effects like the availability of services such as education and health, conversely they might cause social segregation and poverty. A lively social environment has positive effects on the physical environment, like the preservation of historic monuments or the maintenance of green spaces, and these spaces in the city in turn affect the social wellbeing of the denizens.

Their study of Italian towns lead to traditional results as related to city size.[6] An increase in the physical dimension of very small cities caused a reduction in urban disadvantages (such as unemployment and social diseases related to the exploitation of peripheral local economies dependent on a larger city), while for larger cities an increase in size caused an increase in disadvantages like pollution. The increase of service related activities induced economic development in tandem with a relatively controlled increase in congestion (as higher order functions tend to be less polluting and have higher employment rates, which often results in a more secure social atmosphere). They also found that the networking of cities within a region had important implications, at lower but some level of integration, the tendency of a small city to be exploited by a larger city was greater (for example as a dormitory suburb), after a certain threshold of networking was achieved, the advantages increased because of access to information, know-how and greater connectivity.

Their study leads to the conclusion that the influence of city size does exist, but only in combination with function and network integration within the region. Though the cities in their survey had limited

6   They found that the city effect increases with increase in population size up to about 361000 people, after which the diseconomies of scale became more rampant. Similarly, the urban overload tended to decrease up to a population of 55500 inhabitants after which it tended to increase.(Ibid.)

variations, the results are telling of the effects of size and function, especially the positive effects of locating higher order services, such as related to education, in curtailing some of the negative consequences of agglomeration, particularly in smaller cities.
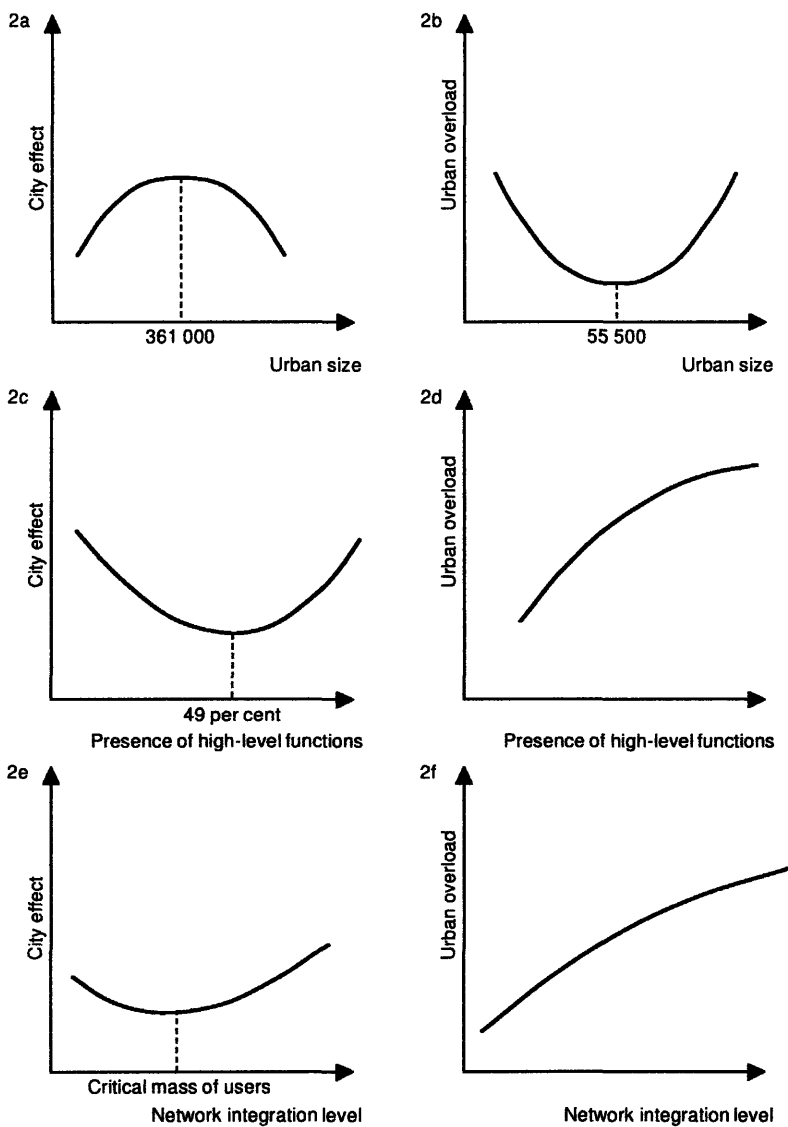

Fig. 4 Graphs illustrating the relationship of urban size, functions and network integration to the city effects and urban overloads.

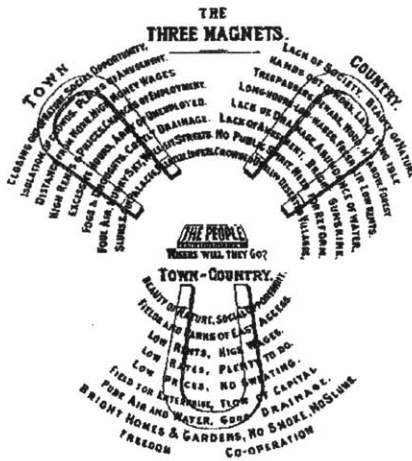Source: Capello and Camagni, Beyond Optimum City Size, 1483

Fig. 6 Ebenezer Howard's diagram illustrating the advantages and disadvantages associated with life in different settings.
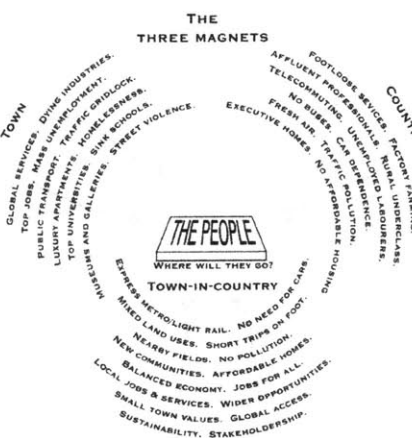Source: Wikipedia

Fig. 7 Peter Hall's reinterpretation of Ebenezer Howard's statement for conditions in the 1990s: The town is more hygienic, the country is equipped with technology, but the town set in the country still emerges as the ideal setting. Source: Peter hall

Diversity of Lifestyles/Socio-Cultural preferences

A new pattern of population movement to smaller cities and towns was observed in the United States and Europe in the 1970's and 1980's, which was not merely a metropolitan spillover into adjacent rural land or a consequence of economic duress, but a more nuanced result of people's preferences and growing discontent with the conditions in large metropolitan areas. Simultaneously, a diametrically opposite movement of populations towards the larger cities was also observed, which instigated what has been described as an urban renaissance, where the return of a gentrified class to the city engendered an urban renewal. [7]

It is important to dwell on the motivations that brought about such concurrent movements in order to holistically understand the situation of smaller cities. Besides economic reasons, the movement out of the city illustrates a preference for diverse urban conditions, based on convenience and quality. Larry H. Long explains the phenomenon through the existence of distinct population subgroups, whose different characteristics, motives and preferences lead to different residential preferences. The future size of these subgroups and the compromises they make between their residential ideals and the actual locations, in addition to the local and larger scale stimuli, would ultimately determine the distribution of urban populations. Some of the reasons that Long elucidates relate to increase in transport infrastructure and connectivity, a shift towards service oriented jobs and communication. In addition, retirement or recreational pursuits and the preference for second homes were important determining factors

7   Larry H. Long, "Back to the Countryside and back to the City in the same Decade," in Back to the City: Issues in neighborhood renovation, ed. Shirley Bradway Laska and Daphne Spain (New York : Pergamon Press, 1980), 61-76

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The movement to smaller cities is then a combination of the preference for a particular lifestyle and the resources that make such a lifestyle possible, including increasing economic opportunities in the smaller cities. Hence from a qualitative point, though large cities continue to have a lure and economies of scale, a diversity of urban types within a region is useful for economic, social and physical reasons. The smaller cities is this context provided a lucrative middle ground, where middle class individuals could access rural amenities along with the conveniences associated with larger cities, including particular livelihood opportunities.
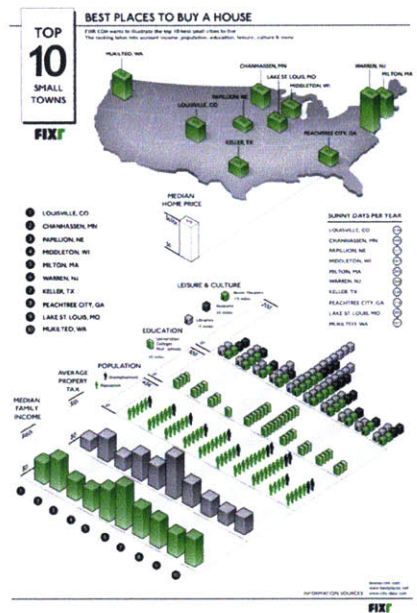

Fig. 5 Poster illustrating factors determining preference for small towns in the United States.
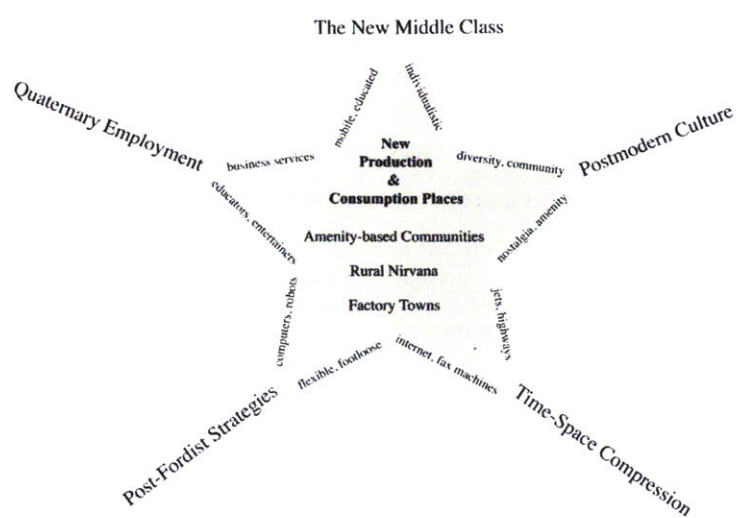Source: www.livingtwincities.com

Fig. 8 Forces affecting the growth in small cities in post-modern societies based on lifestyle preferences.
Source: W.F. Garrett-Petts, ed., The Small Cities Book (Vancouver: 2005), 95.

Fig. 9 Map of France showing location of new urban regions with respect to Paris.
Source: Alkhedheiri, *The Role of Secondary Cities*, 52.
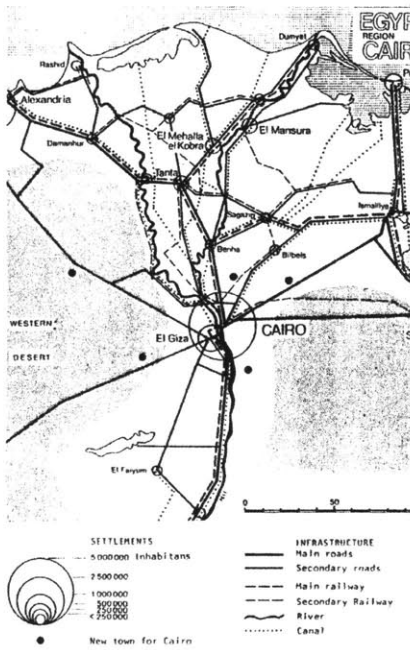
Fig. 10 Location of satellite cities with respect to Cairo.
Source: Alkhedheiri, *The Role of Secondary Cities*, 53.

Urban Overload in Larger Cities

Another important reason for the revival of interest in smaller, dissipated cities in the second half of the 20th century was the growing congestion and problems associated with larger metropolitan areas. The French regional development policy in the 1960's, in an attempt to alleviate some of the acute problems caused by the dominance of Paris diverted investment to eight regional areas, generally composed of two or more cities chosen on the basis of size and location. The strategy was holistic and included the decentralization of culture, education and intellectual facilities with the idea to develop an appropriate *"armature urbaine"* that would eventually become less reliant on the primary urban center and thereby diffuse the positive and negative effects of development. This attempt along with simultaneous renewal efforts in Paris was successful in creating thriving regional centers like the Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing metropolis.[8]

While this strategy of stimulating multi-nodal regional growth centers along with the revival of the primary centers, proved to be holistic and successful, a similar spatial intervention in Egypt proved detrimental. The over saturation of Cairo in 1970's and 80's instigated the development of satellite towns on virgin land around Cairo. Most towns ended up being dependent on Cairo, functioning as elitist suburbs. Little emphasis was given to intelligent transportation linkages and establishing independent economic bases in these towns. The result was the creation of enclaves, removed yet dependent on the primary city, occupied mainly by wealthy people.[9]

In conclusion size and distribution of urban centers is as much a function of economy or efficiency as social or qualitative preferences at a given time and place. It is difficult to prescribe a normative size

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8   Abdulaziz A. Alkhedheiri, *The Role of Secondary Cities in the National Development Process of Saudi Arabia,* (Riyadh: Abdulaziz A. Alkhedheiri, 2002), 49-59.
9   Ibid.

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for a city, however size does have an implication on the perceived qualities, and the experience in Paris is bound to be different from that in a Bastide town in southern France.

1.2 A CASE FOR SMALL CITIES

In lieu of the arguments related to size and the importance of diversity within an urban system the following section elucidates some of the traditional and contemporary arguments favoring the presence and development of small cities, particularly in the context of developing countries.

1.2.1 DEFINING SMALL/SECONDARY CITIES

Little is known about smaller cities although many theoretical and practical arguments support their development with respect to their potential role in regional and national development. Small Cities generally function as secondary cities within a settlement system, and the most frequently used criteria to define a secondary city is population size in relation to density, physical dimension and population of labor force engaged in nonagricultural activities. In addition the diversity of functions, physical and spatial characteristics and linkages with other cities, towns and rural areas provide a starting point for understanding and positioning smaller cities.They connote a *"functional intermediacy in the flows of power, innovation, people and resources among people."*[10] Population data is an easy and useful starting point for identifying secondary cities as data regarding functional intermediacy is difficult to collect and analyze. In general

10   Dennis A. Rondinelli, *Secondary Cities in Developing Countries* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 48.

Rondinelli considers a population threshold of 100,000[11] to classify a city as secondary, however the upper and lower population thresholds vary depending on levels of urbanization and development.

Small cities are distinct from large metropolitan areas and villages, not only in their political will, governance structure and economics, but also in their culture, urban attitudes and opportunities. They are middle cities in many ways and perform functions found in both the urban areas and the rural hinterland. They are like metropolitan centers in that their economies are dominated by commerce and services and some have large manufacturing establishments, yet their industrial sector is composed of small firms and they are not competitive with larger cities. In India for instance, the character of small cities is defined by small scale industries and commercial establishments incorporating the economic functions of market towns as well as small manufacturing centers. Though they possess greater diversity and better quality of social services and facilities than smaller provincial towns and villages, they remain inferior to the metropolitan areas in terms of the quality of education, health, and perceived culture.

1.2.2 SIGNIFICANCE

More than half of the world's urban population resides in urban centers with less than half a million inhabitants, with sizeable proportions in market towns and administrative centers that have between 5,000 and 100,000 inhabitants. This distribution pattern is expected to continue, and it is estimated that the increase in the population of small centers in the South will account for over 40 percent of the total growth of the world's urban population between 2000 and 2015. As a result, by 2015 over 27 percent of the world population will reside in centers of less

11   Ibid.

than 500,000 inhabitants. Their role and potential is mostly discussed in economic and geographic discourses, and very little is said about the urban design implications of these areas.

The global demographic significance of small and medium towns is relatively clear, however their economic, social and cultural role and potential varies and has to be assessed in relation to specific local and national goals and the unique range of skills, resources and networking which are particular to each urban center.

In the case of developing countries, small cities have been promoted in order to achieve certain economic and social objectives. Seen as the bridge between urban high ground and rural hinterland, their location in a settlement system is expected to create equitable spread of development. However since the inception of the policies geared at promoting small cities as far back as the 60's, there has been a continuous gap between the ambitions and persistent ground realities. This can be attributed to the absence of a cohesive strategy for locating the cities in their local and regional context and the lack of qualitative considerations related to the life of the city as policy was focused on providing basic amenities like sanitation; little was said about the public sphere, nature of housing or even zoning in small cities.

Economic Significance
In large parts of the developing world, small cities and towns continue to provide basic services to the rural populations. They act as markets for the agricultural produce from the rural region, either for local consumers or as essential links to national and export markets. However with the improvement in communication and transportation, small and intermediate centers might be bypassed, especially when agriculture is dominated by large commercial producers or when small centers are ill equipped to provide additional services and facilities

like processing and packaging. Their importance from the perspective of small and medium enterprises varies based on local assets like financial capital, education and quality of labor.

Secondary cities offer an intermediary and congenial setting for urbanization, where the cost of developing these towns is more economical than building new towns from scratch or even developing small parts of a big city. The nature of modern technology enables a greater geographical decentralization of production; industry is no longer limited to heavy manufacturing nor is it limited to areas where raw materials are available. This means that secondary cities not located strategically close to primary cities can also act as growth centers, instigating and diffusing development.

Small cities tend to be less competitive in economic terms as compared to their larger counterparts and hence are not able to attract capital and investment and tend to be engaged in singular, less specialized economic activities (which also increases their vulnerability). But with large scale infrastructure and global investment, the scenario is changing fast, and affording new opportunities. The small cities are now presented with an opportunity to resituate themselves within a better connected and more resourceful regional, national and global system. The question then is if they should follow in the footsteps of the mega cities, expanding in size, scale and economy or adopt a different, more sustainable and modest path of development/urbanization. In a context where the region is emerging as an important geographic scale within the global network, dominated previously by the mega city, the relationships between small cities, their rural hinterlands and larger cities becomes an important factor for successful development.

Migration/Social Significance

In explaining migratory patterns from rural to urban, Brugmann highlights the concept of *chain migration*[12] which occurs in three stages. The first, when one family member makes contact with a city, often a smaller city, which generally begins as a seasonal migration where the individual maintains contact with the community and family in the village through periodic trips and monetary support. This is followed by the establishment of a permanent residence in a regional town or city, which lead to the gradual transformation of the city itself. This first stage of migration can be observed in the smaller cities all over the world, which eventually account for the largest component of urban population growth. The consequent stages of migration occur through investment in the next generation's upward mobility into the urban sphere, through education and specialization. Migrants establish strategic community and family ties within the city in order to form stronger footholds in an unfamiliar territory. Migration moves up the settlement hierarchy with every subsequent generation, from urban centers within their home country to a network of cities around the world, *"at once building and laying claim to the global city."* [13] Brugmann observes that these stages of migration occur simultaneously at the present accelerated period of urbanization. Particularly in countries like India, where a majority of the population still lives in rural areas, the smaller cities continue to be important for the earlier stages of rural to urban migration, which might not be the case in more developed regions.

The significance of small cities with respect to migration indicates an important social dimension, particularly as related to poverty reduction. It is in the intermediate centers that strong contacts and ties continue to exist between rural-based and urban-based individuals

12   Jeb Brugmann, Welcome to the Urban Revolution: how cities are changing the world (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009), 41.
13   Ibid. , 42.

and households. And even though urban and rural livelihoods might differ substantially, in the early stages of migration, individuals often rely on both, for example, in times of economic crisis, the safety net of the rural livelihood continues to be accessible, and vice versa. An important factor for this type of rural and urban resource utilization is education and skill building. Small cities are important intermediate centers for higher education and technical training; they become spaces for knowledge and technology diffusion from the urban to the rural, as related to both agricultural and nonagricultural production. Hence the provision of these higher level services increases the validity and potential of small cities for poverty reduction and as social centers.

Quality of life-Urban Design Significance

Small intermediate cities, located between the conditions of urbanity on the one hand and traditional rural cultures on the other hand provide an opportunity for a different type of urbanism. Here the polarity and hybrid character of the two conditions is more clearly visible and permeates into the physical, social and economic aspects of the city. It can be viewed as an asset, where the clarity of the conditions makes possible strategies, more easily implemented in a smaller space. Social equity and wellbeing might be easier to communicate and less complex in such an environment, where the stakes are lower and the environment less hostile and competitive.

Culture, often associated with big city life, differs substantially in small cities. Small cities occupy what many observers have identified as a cultural third place, positioned somewhere between the shadow of large cities but still bound by traditions and a vernacular history. [14] This culture is manifested in periodic events, like annual fairs and weekly markets that create a place where the rural and urban can interact. These events create identity and legacy. Cities like Pushkar

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14   W.F. Garrett-Petts, ed., *The Small Cities Book: On the Cultural Future of Small Cities* (Vancouver: Point Roberts, Washington: New Star Books, 2005), 8.

in Rajasthan, known for its annual camel fair, or Ranchi famous for its periodic markets become important destinations, instigating transport infrastructure and social capital.

Small cities are indeed small, easily traversed and comprehended. Smallness can be a virtue when viewed from the point of maneuverability, community and identity. In developing countries like India they are often associated with fewer four wheeled vehicles and greater efficiency of local public transport. Because of the size, they illustrate a model of pedestrian friendly urban development which also affords lesser congestion and pollution. In addition, fewer social and economic conflicts suggest the potential for a more inclusive urban sphere, a type of *"social endogamy"*[15] (a function of relatively lesser social and cultural diversity).

Their surface sizes, urban dimensions and lack of complexity create conditions that have the potential to enable more efficient urban development planning as compared to larger cities-a lucrative ground for experimentation and alternative notions of urbanity, community participation, equity, functional coexistence. It can be argued that *city projects* or urban design interventions would make an observable difference, if they are intelligent and take into account the local resources and socio-cultural particularities.

The pattern of concentrated growth within a few urban centers was favored in developing countries based on the argument that concentration of capital investment in the largest metropolitan areas was the most effective strategy for promoting development, especially where resources and capital were scarce. The argument was that that high rate of output from such a strategy would automatically reverse the original spatial polarization and spread the benefits of development through a trickledown effect to the rural and impoverished areas.

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15   UIA CIEMS, *Intermediate Cities and World Urbanization,* (Llieda: UIA CIEMS 1999), 45.

1.3 NOTES ON POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Such growth trends, prescribing the Rank Size[16] distribution of cities found in western industrial countries, proved to be dissatisfactory for developing countries.

In the 1970s as the polarity between the urban areas and the rural hinterland became explicit and the few primate cities began to show signs of exhaustion, development policies had to be turned away from the goal of maximizing economic growth in favor of more moderate rates with a socially equitable distribution of benefits. Smaller secondary cities came into focus, as devices which could generate such balanced development. Some work was done regarding their function and position, within the fields of urban planning, economics and social geography. One of the most compelling arguments that emerged from research done by international agencies like World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was that secondary cities provided a spatial structure for urbanization which promoted balanced economic growth described by social equity. However these studies and the few others that followed show a marked absence of urban strategy, especially related to place and identity in smaller cities. Some initiative was taken in this regard, focusing on the specific culture and narratives related to smaller cities in the North American context; however studies in the developing world have remained limited to economic and administrative policy.

The specific policies for small and intermediate cities have had varying degrees of success and some notable failures, sometimes at high economic costs. The failure of policies stems from an insensitivity to the tremendous variety that describes small cities. They have tended

16   Rank Size distribution refers to a system of measuring and characterizing cities where the population size is inversely proportionate to the rank of the city. In such a system there are a small number of very large cities, more numerous middle size cities and a very large number of small cities and towns. The regularity of this distribution in so many countries, especially in the developed world is best explained by the Central Place Theory.

to focus on the generalized attributes of the towns itself, ignoring the nature and relationship of the cities to their larger territory. [17] Policies that could potentially have a positive impact are in a sense self-evident, related to the provision of better transport and communication infrastructure; encouraging decentralization of governance and accountability; strengthening of local democracy and civil society to create mechanisms to enable local decision making and actions. Marginalized groups, like migrants have the potential to find a voice in the affairs of smaller cities because of the lack of complexity and softer power structures in place. Policies that encourage the establishment of education and training institutions, particularly those related to agriculture help set up a base for long term sustainable development at the regional scale. In terms of spatial planning, policies that encourage the location of new institutions and clean industry close to the city or strategically within it help to catalyze renewal.[18]

17   See Cecilia Tacoli and David Satterthwaite, "The Urban Part of Rural Development: the Role of Small and Intermediate Urban Centres in their Regional and Local Economies, Including Rural Development and Poverty Reduction," International Institute for Environment and Development (May 2003): http://www.khanya-aicdd. org/publications/Satherwaitepaper (Accessed February 23rd 2011)
18   Ibid.

"Small cities possess peripheral vision, a way of seeing exhibited by those situated on the margin but self-consciously aware of their relationship to the center." [19]

The characteristics of smaller urban settings are likely to differ substantially from their metropolitan counterparts. Small cities fill an important transitional position between local communities (villages and towns) and major urban centers and as intermediaries in the diverse networking between the local and the metropolitan, a creative force in the bottom up and the top down. [20]

They provide a valuable scale for understanding a national urbanization process, especially one that is still developing. Because of the unique middle condition, small cities become places of possibility, of refuge and social equity. They define different economic roles, human experiences, spatial arrangements, power structures, economic opportunities and cultural diversity.

19   Ratboy, *The Small Cities Book, 8.*
20   Kenneth R. Hall, ed., *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking-In the Indian Ocean Realm, c. 400-1800* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008),
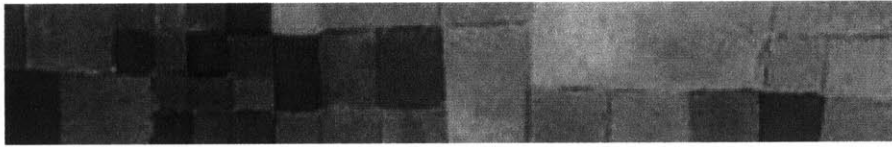
CHAPTER 2

SMALL CITIES IN INDIA

Sagarika Suri

2   SMALL CITIES IN INDIA

This chapter is an account of small cities in India. It situates small cities within the urbanization process of the country, from the colonial period to the present and then proceeds to describe the politics, economics and policies associated with them on the one hand, and the ground realities, morphologies and experiences on the other. Finally it discusses small cities in light of economic liberalization in India in terms of both opportunities and critiques presented by the heightened infrastructure and investment activities that are accompanying it.

2.1   A RELUCTANCE TO URBANIZE

"(The Indian people) have to choose whether they will be educated or remain ignorant; whether they will come closer in contact with the outer world and become responsive to its influences, or remain secluded and indifferent; whether they will be organized or disunited, bold or timid, enterprising or passive; an industrial or an agricultural nation, rich or poor; strong and respected or weak and dominated by forward nations. Actions not sentiments will be the determining factor."

The engineer M. Visveswaraya, writing in 1920[1]

The nationalists were faced with the challenge of constructing a wholesome identity, a 'brand' India, for the citizens recovering from colonial exploitation and violent exodus, an identity that would provide a recognizable and indigenous image for the nascent country in the global arena. Within the discourse on national identity and modernity, two distinct viewpoints emerged with regards to the city and the countryside.

Fig. 1 Campaign poster of the Indian National Congress.
Source: Guha, *India after Gandhi.*

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[1]   Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: the history of the world's largest democracy* (New York: Ecco, 2007), 209.

100
90
80
70
60
Percentage of Urban Population
50
40
30
20
10
0

1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020 2030 2040 2050

Years

— World
— More developed regions
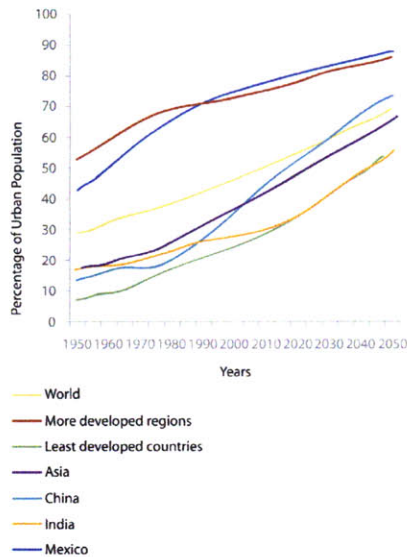— Least developed countries
— Asia
— China
— India
— Mexico

Fig.2 Graphs showing the relatively low rate of urbanization in India
Source: Sanyal, *The Alternative Urban Futures Report,* 20.

"India resides in her villages" [2]

At the time of independence, almost 75% of the country was employed in agriculture, contributing to about 60% of the total GDP. Because of the agrarian nature of much of the land and a pervasive respect for Gandhi's vision[3], for most nationalists, the village epitomized an *authentic and sovereign* condition through which national identity could be projected. The village was at once internal and distinct from the politics, economics, science and technology, that represented western dominion,[4] Despite bold steps taken by Nehru to instill a strong industrial base, a rural bias did permeate into several aspects of society, economics and policy, and its effects are recognizable till today. Concomitantly India has been a country relatively reluctant to urbanize.

Commanding Heights[5]

In tandem with the *"village fetish"*[6] that dominated nationalist mindsets, the soviet inspired socialist development model that described India for a large part of its post-independence history believed pervasively in the *"redemptive mystique of large industry."* Most industries were either controlled by the state or through public-private partnership; private enterprise and individual entrepreneurship, particularly related to consumer goods was discouraged by way of heavy regulation by the state. It was believed that the construction and control of industry by the state would bridge the development lacuna irrespective of

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2   Mahatma Gandhi, as cited by Guha, *India after Gandhi,* 119.

3   Some people advocated a "Gandhian Constitution", based on a revived Panchayati Raj system, in which the village was considered the basic unit of politics and governance. (Guha, *India after Gandhi,* 119.)

4   Gyan Prakash, "The Urban Turn," in *Sarai Reader 02: the cities of everyday life*, eds. Ravi Vasudevan, et al. (Delhi: Sarai, CSDS+ The Society for Old & New Media, 2002), 3.

5   The term is used to describe the importance given by the state to heavy industry, power generation and large scale infrastructure for national development

6   Sanjoy Chakravorty, "How Does Structural Reform Affect Regional Development? Resolving Contradictory Theory with Evidence from India," *Economic Geography* 76 (October 2000): 373, http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.mit.edu/stable/144392.

where it was located; as a result its spatial context was neglected, and industrialization failed to catalyze and guide urbanization. Simultaneously, focus on large scale infrastructure, like dams and power plans, was accompanied by a general neglect of smaller city scale projects.

In addition primary education, labor intensive export and the service sector remained neglected for a large part and all these factors contributed to the continued dependence of a large section of the population on subsistence farming and a reluctance to shift from agrarian livelihoods. Almost a dictate, the popular patriotic cry-*'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan'*-which translates to hail soldier hail farmer, laid emphasis on defense and agriculture as important facets of national identity and indicates the psychological extent of the bias. The relatively low level of urbanization was used as an excuse for the lack of critical urban studies within Indian academia as it was a popularly held belief that there was no dichotomy between the traditional city and the village.[7] Policy and development related decisions[8] not only lead to a general neglect of the urbanization process, which then proceeded to occur in an arbitrary manner, but also compounded problems related to the urban-rural interface, rural migration to urban areas and the relationship of the growing urban agglomerations to the rural hinterland.[9] With the exception of Chandigarh, the capital for the recently partitioned state of Punjab, very few new cities were planned in the post-independence period.
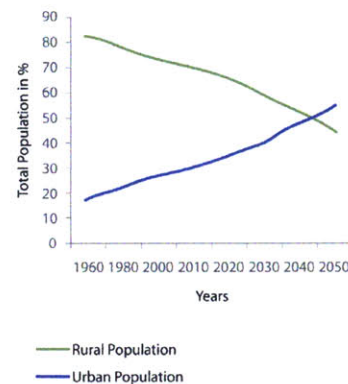
Fig. 3 Graph indicating the change in urban and rural populations in india
Source: Sanyal, *The Alternative Urban Futures Report,* 23.

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7   Sandhu, *Urbanization in India*, 25.
8   Resource allocation by the state and central government has continued to prioritize rural areas and issues. For example, the government allocates its urban citizens 1/6th of the per capita spending, while the spending on the urban poor is about 1/10th that on the rural poor. This attitude is reinforced through the five-year development plans which have till quite recently neglected urban infrastructure and planning. However a high level of centralization for a large part of post-independence history, corruption at myriad levels, in a large and varied country has made it difficult for subsidies and incentives to make a substantial difference for rural people and places. (Sanjeev Sanyal, *The Alternative Urban Futures Report: urbanization and sustainability in India* (New Delhi: Thomas Press), 21.)
9   Sanyal, *The Alternative Urban Futures Report,* 21.

Urbanization has occurred despite a lack of comprehensive planning for it, and the Indian city has reached a point where it would be fatal to ignore it. The few cities that were bred grew to gigantic proportions. The phenomenon of the Indian mega city is now being discussed with great fervor-at home and abroad-its problems, futures, fantasies and dichotomies are capturing the imagination of architects, geographers, economists, writers and cinematographers. At the same time small cities continue to be ignored, with fewer books, films, lectures and policies dedicated to their life and understanding. However, judging by the saturation of large cities and the heightened infrastructural activity being undertaken across the country, one can confidently predict that many small cities (particularly along industrial belts and mega highways) are set to define the next wave of urbanization in India. The question is whether their development will become a mere transitory 'historic stage'[10] from village to mega-city, or if an alternative imagination can guide their future, promoting diversity within the urban sphere-making a case for a successful small city.

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10   Nehru regarded the city and urbanization at large as the engine and symbol of progress and modernity. He viewed the city and the village as stages of development, related through time and not so much in space, the village being the backward stage that needed to become obsolete for progress to ensue through urbanization.

2.2 PATTERNS OF URBANIZATION

The pattern of distribution of urban centers in India appears quite balanced at first glance, with differentiated sizes of urban centers occurring very much as prescribed by the Rank Size Rule or Central Place Theory[11], however the developmental and psychological contrast among these is quite stark. The present structure of urbanization in India is largely a result of the preference given to certain urban centers during colonial times, by way of infrastructure, administration and social-cultural life.

2.2.1 CENTRALIZATION

Kundu argues that two centuries of colonial domination adversely affected the pace and pattern of urbanization in India.[12] Strategic port cities were developed as administrative and trade centers with the primary aim of maximizing economic gain and control over the population. These cities became places from where raw materials were siphoned off to Europe and were hence linked to the European centers of production and governance rather than to the urban or rural territories in which they were located. Even the infrastructural developments undertaken by the British- for example the extensive railway system-was strategized for extraction and efficient transportation of raw materials. The manufacturing sector was neglected in general and many cities and towns that had been linked to the rural hinterland through small industries saw a decline in the nineteenth century, many were converted into administrative centers. There is evidence of a shift of population from the urban centers back to the villages as urban livelihoods became less sustainable under the
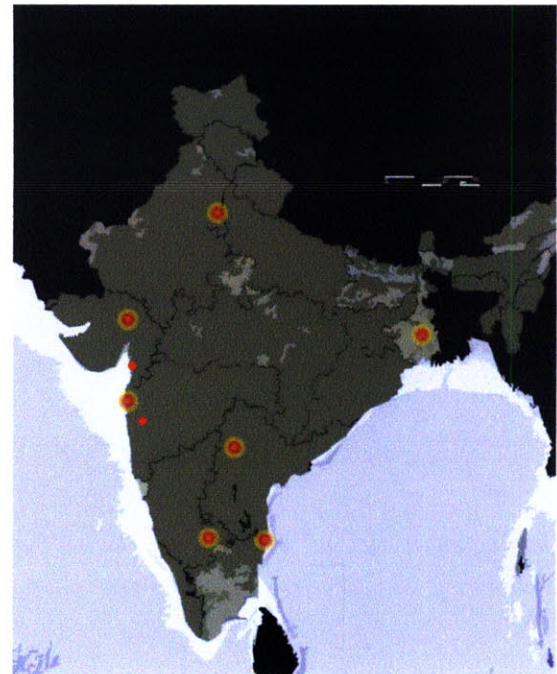
Fig. 4 Location of Mega cities in India.
Source: Author

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11   The Rank Size rule and Central Place theory explain the relationship of cities of different sizes and function within a system of settlements. They have been explained in greater detail in the previous chapter.

12   Abanti Kundu, "Urbanization in India: A contrast with Western Experience," *Social Scientist 11* (April 1983): 37-49, http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.mit.edu/stable/3517022.

Fig 5 Map showing the distribution of
cities of different sizes
Source: Author

Fig 6 Map showing the distribution of urban settlements with respect to population density.
Source: Author

Persons per Sq. Km.

1,600

800

400

200

100

50

25
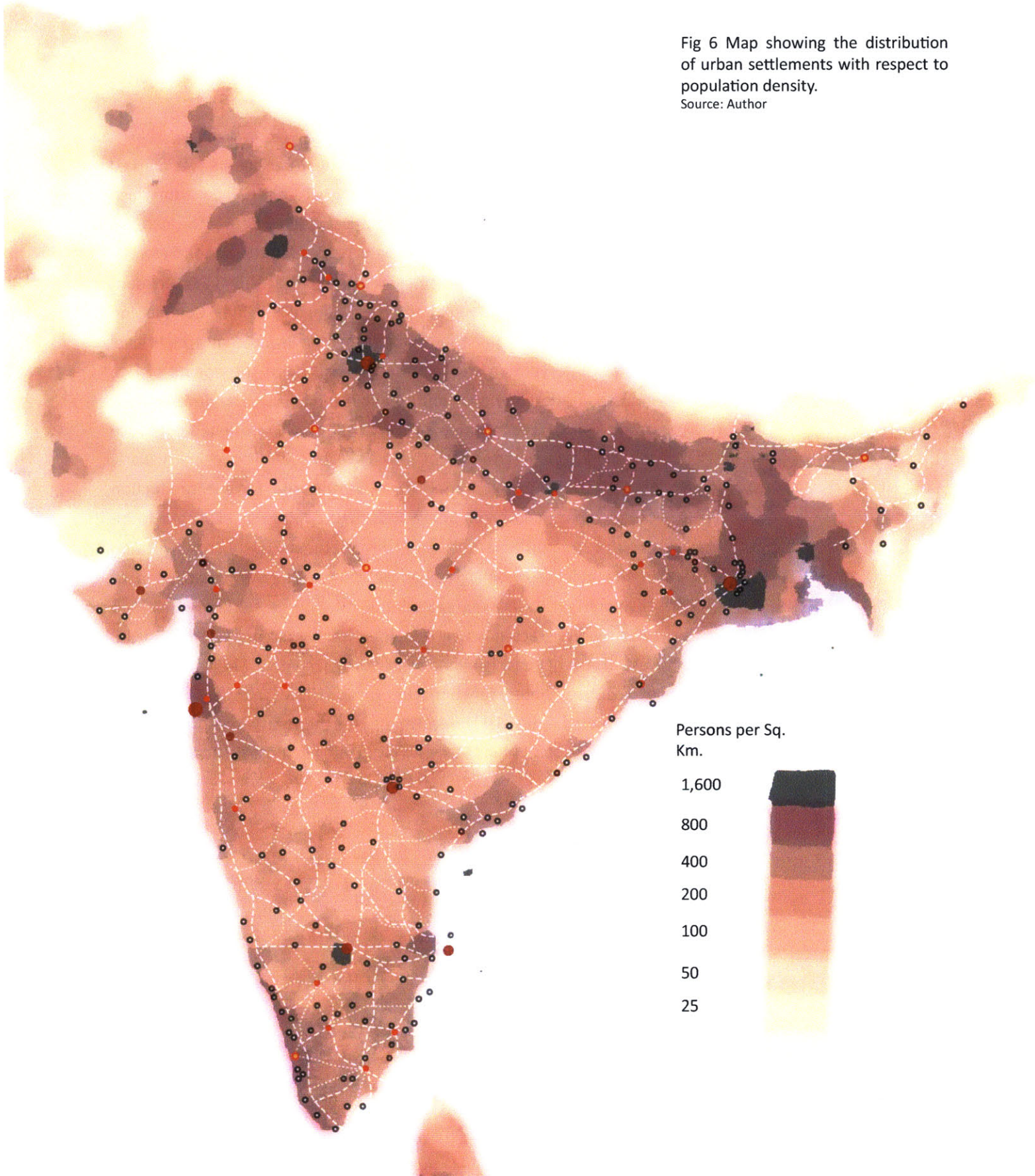
colonizers.[13] Kundu argues that in many ways India was forced down a path of deindustrialization and de-urbanization under the auspices of colonial rule.[14]

As a result, at the time of independence the urban sphere was marked by the prominence of a few cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Calcutta which had been British strongholds. The polarization is evident in the increase in the population of these larger class 1 cities[15] in the period between 1901 and 1971, while the smaller towns either remained stagnant or saw a decline in population. The National Planning Commission that was set up in India in 1938 strongly believed that a high level of state intervention was required to neutralize the effects of late industrialization and two centuries of colonial rule. The development process instigated through five year plans was designed to evoke the old nationalist model of swadeshi or self-reliance, particularly through the implementation of heavy industry for the production of machinery and steel. These industrial complexes expected to be engines for urbanization and developments were concentrated in the older economic regions, leading to greater polarization of development. A few segregated industrial pockets emerged with an urbanized character, which remained mostly disconnected from the vast stretch of hinterland and smaller urban centers. The development of a complementary functional interaction between town and country and gradual industrial transformation of the rural areas that marked urban development in the west was missing in most of the third world

13   For example: there existed 26 trading and manufacturing centers in Dinajpur district of Bengal in 1808 which were reduced to 6 in 1861, to which 20 administrative centers were added. This signaled a change in the functional characteristics of smaller urban centers of Bengal, leading to a continuous out migration of population from these towns, often to rural areas. (Kundu, Urbanization in India, 42.)
14   Ibid.
15   Cities with a population greater than 100,000 are classified as class 1. Under the Indian classification of cities, an increase in class is related to a decrease in the size of city

and particularly in India[16]. The high level of centralization created difficulties in the establishment of smaller service or consumer based enterprises which might have boosted localized urban development.

In addition the larger million plus cities developed in size but were unable to generate surplus in order to provide social and economic facilities for the increasing population. The problem was compounded by the lack of a comprehensive urban framework and planning. Like many newly independent countries in the period after World War II, the trend of a few large cities has continued to dominate the urban sphere. A conscious centralized agenda that favored a small number of dissipated urban nodes was based on the argument that the concentration and streamlining of limited resources in a few regions would be more beneficial and that an inevitable trickling down of development would eventually lead to a balanced distribution of wealth, benefiting not only the urban regions, but the rural hinterland as well. By the 1960s the flaws in this strategy began to show up in the polarized development covering much of the land. The large number of smaller cities and provincial towns continued to have a marginal existence, not featuring high on the cultural or physical agenda of the burgeoning nation. They suffered on two accounts, on the one hand from the general neglect of the urbanization process and on the other by most attention being reserved for the existing colonial centers.
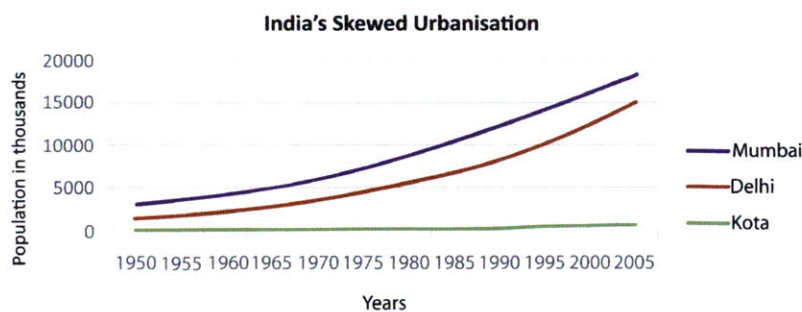

Fig. 7 Graph comparing the rate of urbanization in larger cities like Mumbai with smaller centers like Kota
Source: Sanyal, *The Alternative Urban Futures Report,* 32.

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16   Kundu, *Urbanization in India*, 39.

A: Calicut, Kerala.
Source: www.panoramio.com

B: Anand, Gujarat.
Source: www.panoramio.com

C: Mumbai.
Source: www. letsjapan.wordpress.com

Fig. 8 Comparing skylines

2.2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

In terms of a demographic picture, of the 4378 urban centers and townships (2001 census) spread across the country, only 35 have populations above one million. While 15% of the total urban population resides in these 35 cities the remaining 85% is spread out in small and medium intermediate towns. The exorbitant increase in the size of urban agglomerations like Mumbai (19 million in 2001) and Delhi (15.9 million in 2001) in the last few decades has led to several problems related to environmental degradation, congestion, social disparity. These cities which exude an unprecedented psychological attraction for the rural poor are in reality unable to provide physically for migrating populations, creating new challenges related to land, jobs, and resources, political and religious discord. At the same time there has been deterioration in the small cities as centers of economic and social activity brought on by a steady shift of the middle class to the larger urban centers as well as the growing trend of rural migrants bypassing smaller centers, attracted by the promise of the global city.

Even small cities which grew as university towns and around strong social institutions have experienced a steady decline, while new universities set up in smaller cities in the post-independence era have not become catalysts for sustainable development, as no real effort was made to link these to the wider urban community. A case in point is the city of Kanpur, with its prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). The city is known more for its industrial pollution and sordid state than for the elite engineers it exports to foreign countries. The successful cities in India continue to be those that inherited a colonial legacy and no remarkable new urban centers have flourished despite increase in investment, infrastructure and social capital. [17]

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17   Sanyal, *The Alternative Urban Futures Report,* 32.

The fact that a large part of India continues to be in the early stages of urbanization, with the exception of its few and far between mega cities presents opportunities to direct the next stages of urbanization for a sustainable and equitable future.

A: Navsari, Gujarat.
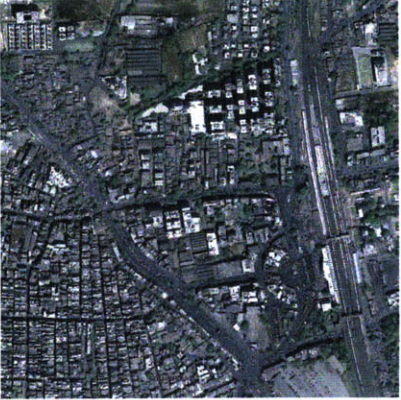
B: Surat, Gujarat.

B: Mumbai.

Fig. 9 Comparing Fabric.
Source: Google Earth

2.2.3 DECENTRALIZATION -LESSONS AND CRITIQUES

In the 1980's, studies on urban settlement systems in India and other developing countries done by organizations like the World Bank and USAID concluded that the urbanization process had resulted in the steady flow of resources towards large urban agglomerations, which had heightened urban disparity. In principle, Small and Medium Towns (SMTs) were recognized as having a potential and function within the system of urban settlements, especially as related to the flow of migrants to metropolitan areas, and as growth and service centers for the rural hinterland, to accelerate the geographical spread of development. This followed recommendations and policies for the development of towns of smaller sizes as social, economic and cultural centers for their rural hinterlands.

The Integrated Scheme for the Development of Small and Medium (IDSMT) was established in the 1980s with the aim of diverting state and central funding for improving basic facilities, like sanitation and roads, while simultaneously instigating commercial enterprise and investments in about 400 target towns and cities identified by the scheme.

The IDSMT scheme failed to have a widespread impact on the condition of the small cities on several accounts. There are practical and administrative problems, such as local accountability and corruption. However an intrinsic reason for failure was the inability of the state to understand the unique position of small urban centers. The projects instigated in these cities, like commercial complexes which remain unoccupied for years, showed a disregard for the hybrid condition and subtle nuances that define their life, concerned primarily with policy and investment, they failed to acknowledge the spatial or urban scale aspects that are important for a sense of belonging and identity.

2.3   *LIBERALIZATION AND URBANIZATION*

"Historically, the state has been instrumental in shaping the economic geography of regions in the developing world-starting with the establishment and privileging of port cities for external trade and administration during the colonial period, to the creation of a complex array of rules and regulations that established location incentives and disincentives during the nationalist period." [18]

In 1991, Dr. Manmohan Singh as finance minister, heralded economic liberalization, in order to overcome a shortage of foreign exchange reserves. Liberalization signaled a significant shift in both economic and socio-cultural mindsets. Where the country had previous been described by a conservative or traditional attitude towards economics, urbanization and industry, a type of economic and consumer minimalism, it was now flooded with dynamic choices, in terms of industry, private enterprise, foreign investment, consumer goods, entertainment et al. With the license raj becoming increasingly obsolete, entrepreneurship and upward mobility have become common place.

Economic growth has changed India's class structure, from one characterized by sharp contrasts between the small elite and a large impoverished mass to one with a substantial intermediate class, finding an increasingly democratic presence in the city. The 'urban' had previously described an anomalous condition, a place where the colonial elite and then the indigenous political elite resided, today it has emerged as an increasingly democratic space within which ethnic, gender and religious struggles are played out, sometimes finding resolution and at other times leading to violence and despair. While there was some debate regarding the identity of the burgeoning
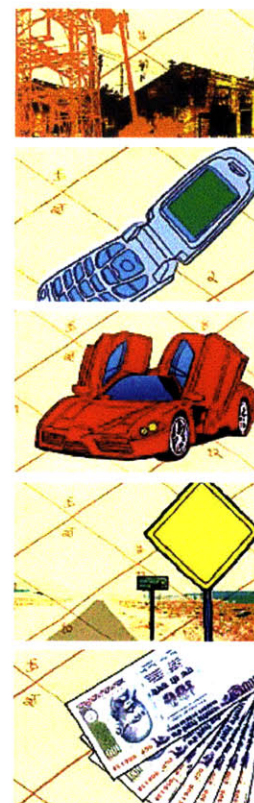
Source: www.indiatoday.com

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18   Chakravorty, *How Does Structural Reform Affect Regional Development,* 367.

nation at the time of independence, there is no doubt that mega cities have emerged as torch bearers of development and progress in liberal India. The preoccupation with the idea of the world class city, the enthusiasm to host international games events signal the priority being given to the urban agenda.

2.3.1 THE URBAN MISSION

The73[rd] and 74th amendments to the constitution in 1992 sought to grant greater self-governing capabilities to the villages as well as the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) of cities. These ideas of spatial and democratic decentralization are founded on the aims of improving citizen participation, performance and accountability of local institutions.[19]

Fig. 10 Reprsentative image for the JNNURM on the Government of India website. Source: www.india.gov.in

Fig. 11 New urban infrastructure built with JNNURM funding: Flyover in Surat.
Source: www.suratmunicipal.org

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) is an unprecedented city modernization scheme that was launched in 2005. It combines the provision of urban infrastructure with the prerequisite of urban reform. The scheme works in tandem with the 74th amendment and the cities, with empowered local urban bodies, are expected to prepare development strategies and project proposals. It proposes the utilization of 20 billion dollars of state and central funds in a period of 7 years for the improvement of urban infrastructure and services. It has two broad missions, one related to services and infrastructure and the other dealing with poverty reduction and

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19   Decentralization has emerged as a dominant trend in world politics related to the ideological shift in which the legitimacy of central-state led development has been challenged on the grounds that it produces systems of governance that undermine economic performance and effective public policy. This is directly related to economic liberalization, the growing importance of the region and sub national territories, which have weakened the traditional nation state and created the conditions under which more local identities could emerge. (Craig Johnson, "Decentralization in India: Poverty, Politics and Panchayati Raj," *Overseas Development Institute-working paper 199*, (February 2003):1, http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/1767.)

improvement of slums. Certain city and state level reforms related to tax collection, community participation and public disclosure are required to make the funding available for the projects. As of 2009, 415 projects have been approved in the 65 large cities identified by the scheme. The mission supports public-private partnerships in the provision of infrastructure and execution of projects, with the state and central funding accounting for between 50-80% of the total cost.

2.3.2 SHORTSIGHTED SCHEMES FOR SMALL CITIES

Within the JNNURM, the Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) is the subset dealing with small and medium towns. It subsumes the IDSMT discussed earlier along with a scheme related to the provision of water in small cities. The aims of the UIDSSMT are similar to the JNNURM and include the provision of infrastructure and the creation of public assets, in the spirit of the neo-liberal agenda, the scheme also promotes public-private partnerships and the ULBs of the small cities have the responsibility of preparing project proposals that have to be approved by a state level agency.

So far the schemes have been tokenistic and short sighted, unable to create holistic vision for small city 'development'. The scheme instigates competition amongst small cities for acquiring funds for urban projects. The pre-requisite of reforms means that progressive states and better off small cities would be more successful in achieving the required goals and backward cities would continue to be neglected. Like the IDSMT, the scheme focuses on the provision of basic amenities, most of the projects approved under the scheme are related to the mending of roads, waste management, drainage etc. While basic amenities are crucial, larger gestures related to identity, livability and sustainability are absent.

In addition a more comprehensive approach which looks at cities

within their regional contexts is lacking. Small cities incorporate a diverse variety of urban settlements, their demography, economics and urban life vary between regions and states, and a single central scheme needs to be particularized at least to the regional level.

Small cities lack the capacity to mobilize resources, though their size does allow the opportunity for greater success in terms public participation and accountability of local institutions. Unless certain regional mechanisms are put into place, the only lucrative future for a small city is to be subsumed into the municipal corporation of a larger city or a change in rank size through the agglomeration of surrounding villages or other smaller cities.

2.3.3 COUNTERPOINT

"The drastic neo-liberal restructuring of the Indian economy after 1991 produced a high-tech boom and stock market bubble whose frenzied epicenters were a handful of Cinderella cities." [20]

Unlike China, democracy enables open criticism and public opposition to liberalization in India. Increasing academic dialogue, social activism and strategic state bashing by political parties not in power provide a multifaceted counterpoint to the general euphoria associated with the opening up of the Indian economy. Most critiques are engendered from the growing disparities within the emerging global cities and between the favored urban areas and the less fortunate hinterland. For example, economist Amartya Sen worries that as these inequalities intensify, "half of India will look and live like California and the other half like Sub Saharan Africa."[21]

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20   Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London; New York: Verso, 2006), 170.
21   As cited by Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 2003.

The Segre 'gated' City

As has been discussed earlier, after liberalization, the city emerged as a beacon of development. Enthusiastic efforts at decentralization, policy reform and urban projects continue to be made to improve the infrastructure, governance and quality of life in cities. Like in much of the global south, there is a flipside, the spawning of high-tech enclaves, river-front recreation projects, international airports and multiplexes has occurred alongside ubiquitous slum settlements, environmental degradation, growing crime rate and violent conflict. The city has been falling short of providing for the influx of migrants, who inevitably make their homes within the interstices, bereft of basic amenities like sanitation, electricity and drinking water. Parts of large cities that are occupied illegally foster resilient communities and when they prove to be lucrative vote banks, they were even regularized and sanitized. In Delhi for instance, many colonies that were engendered by migrant communities, especially along the eastern banks of the River Yamuna, proved to be symbiotic with the city and were eventually regularized and absorbed into the fabric.

Scarcity of land and lack of capital continue to be impediments facing cities in the race to acquire greater national and foreign investment. Solutions are being sought through privatization of infrastructure and the simplification of land use conversion within the city, both made possible by decentralized control and de-regularization. The provision of a higher Floor Space Index (FSI) within the city and transference of low value activities, like slums, to the periphery are changing the physical and demographic character of larger cities. The marginalization of the urban poor has become more physically manifest through evictions from the city and 'resettlement' at the peripheries. The recent eviction of almost 40,000 people from the banks of the river Yamuna in New Delhi to make way for the Commonwealth Games, and the general appropriation of the river as a recreation and investment zone, worthy of the growing middle classes, is one of many such instances where the city was unable to stay true to its democratic spirit.

2.3.4 CONTEMPORARY PATTERNS OF URBANIZATION

Both proponents and critiques of globalization and liberalization concede on the heightened levels of urbanization expected to befall Indian cities. According to one argument, the predicted increase in urban populations is an over estimation.[22] The decline in the natural growth of the population and a slower rate of rural to urban migration, due to exclusionary living and working condition discussed earlier, coupled with the decline in demographic growth in smaller cities and towns will cause a depression in the rate of urbanization, even before it reaches the 50% mark. In addition there is a growing tendency towards the regularization of the informal sector, which constitutes a large part of the economic activity in Indian cities. This is happening because of the demands of the global market and the nature of new economic activities and will mean that migrants lacking basic levels of literacy, communication skills and market awareness will find it difficult to get jobs. Kundu highlights the paradox-*"Unemployment will continue despite the unprecedented growth in employment, institutionalizing disparity and strengthening the segmentation of cities into rich and poor areas."* [23]

The problem is not so much the increasing levels of urbanization, with only 26% of the population in urban areas there is still a necessity and scope for urbanization, especially with regards to disguised unemployment in rural areas, what needs to be assessed critically is the patterns of concentration of urbanization.

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22   Kundu observes that the growth rate of the urban population in India during the 1970s was 3.9 percent, dropping down to 3.1 per cent in the 1980s, one of the lowest in this century. This dropped even further to 2.7 per cent during the 1990s. If these trends continue, the level of urbanization will drop below 40 percent by 2050, less than what has been projected by most national and international organizations. Amitabh Kundu, "Future of Indian Cities," *Urban Age* (November 2007):1, http://www.urban-age.net/10_cities/07_mumbai/_essays/india_Kundu (accessed on 17th June, 2011).
23   Ibid., 3.

Most industrial development and infrastructure continues to be concentrated within larger cities or in states with a stronger economic base and higher capacity for resource mobilization and viability of establishment. The location of foreign and domestic private investment is a function of maximum profit, presence of infrastructure and particular type of labor. The growing saturation in larger cities means that investment is moving first towards the peripheral areas or to cities located in the proximity of mega cities, thereby catalyzing the formation of large metropolitan agglomerations. Small cities like Ghaziabad and Thane located at the peripheries of Delhi and Mumbai respectively and Burdwan near Calcutta have seen phenomenal growth.

Often the nature of development and the subjugation by the dominant city creates unwieldy urban places. Small cities like Gurgaon, located 25 kilometers south west of Delhi is an example of how the location of Special Economic Zones and private investment guided the growth of Delhi in the 1990s. The city was planned to help Delhi fight congestion, providing much needed housing and office space. It has emerged as a symbol of liberalized India, a flashy boom town rendered in glass and steel, connected to Delhi by state of the art infrastructure, like the Metro and the refurbished 8 lane highway. Yet within itself it is an urban nightmare, Gurgaon can boast of its several shopping malls, golf courses and condominiums, but suffers from long power cuts, has no sewage treatment and waste disposal mechanisms and a fast sinking water table. It was built in the early nineties as a joint operation between the public and private sector. Land was acquired by almost 45 private developing corporations from the Government authority within a stipulated master plan, they proceeded to build offices and high end residences but had no incentives to provide public infrastructure. In the absence of a proper regulatory mechanism and
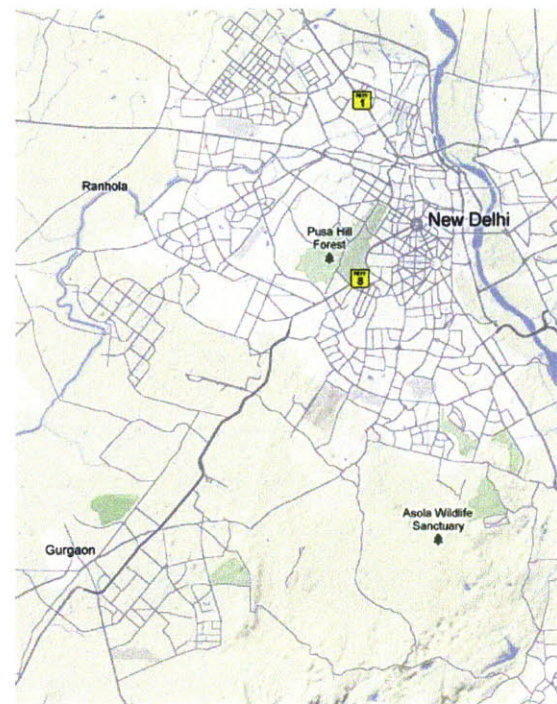
A: The location of Gurgaon with respect to Delhi.
Source: Google Maps

B: Congestion on the refurbished mega highway: a daily menace for people working and living in Gurgaon. Source: www.mid-day.com

C: A Business product outsourcing centre (BPO) or Call centre in Gurgaon, built on a Special Economic Zone. Source: www. libcom.org

Fig. 12 Gurgaon

administration[24] the city continues to suffer from a lack of the most basic open spaces, public transportation and cultural institutions, as within the private-developer set up, the essential components of a city were overlooked in favor of profit generating enterprises. What could have been an opportunity for good city making, given the investment and priority bestowed upon Gurgaon, has turned into *"a soulless collection of buildings."*[25]

Second tier cities, with million plus populations are the next in line. There is already a growing trend of Business Product Outsourcing centers (BPOs) and software related industries moving to cities like Pune, Indore and Jaipur. They are predicted as being the incubators of India's growing middle class. State governments are outdoing themselves in making these next tier cities a lucrative destination for investment. They have the comparative advantage of an English speaking, educated population, relatively cheaper real estate, civic services and basic infrastructure. Cities like Coimbatore with a population of about 1 million, located in the prosperous state of Tamil Nadu, has recently expanded from textile manufacturing to software development and automobile parts.

In this next stage of urbanization, the smallest cities and towns, particularly in the backward regions seem to be at a disadvantage yet again. In a climate of preferred decentralization, where the onus is on the urban local bodies, these cities continue to lack the political clout and agency for resource creation and mobilization. They figure short on the national psyche and in the absence of the state making conscious efforts to direct investment their way, they are destined to remain neglected and backward.

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24   A district administrative apparatus largely oriented to a rural population was suddenly given the task to manage a large city

25   Philipp Rode, "Integrated City Making: governance, planning and transport," Urban Age India, (July 2008): 2-10, http://www.urban-age.net/0_downloads/ICM_ Detailed_Report.

Improving the condition of small towns and by targeting them as regional development nodes the country stands to gain on two accounts- first in terms of improving rural conditions, as these cities continue to be an important urban contact for the large rural population, second, in dissipating the congestion and saturation plaguing large cities. In addition small cities provide an alternative urban condition within the region, one which is in contact with hyper urbanism and with the pastoral hinterland.

2.4 PORTRAIT OF A SMALL CITY

"Across all the cultures in the world, the landscapes where we live share these same characteristics: a seemingly diffuse unordered structure of varying urban tracts, containing individual islands of geometrical order; no clear center; and many functionally differentiated branches, networks, and nodes." [26]

2.4.1 HYBRIDITY

Mumbai and Surat are now connected by 263 kilometers of smooth tarmac belonging to a recently completed portion of the mega highway project known as the 'Golden Quadrilateral', a continuous loop of expressway connecting the major cities in the four quadrants of India. In between there are a string of benign small cities which have been linked by the western railway corridor and a web of internal roads for a long time. Some are bisected by the highway while others feel the tremors of the fast moving freight and cars, as businessmen and goods make the journey between the two cities. Some drive non-stop covering the distance in less than four hours, others stop at the recently constructed mall outside the mid-point city of Vapi- a sparsely

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26   Thomas Sieverts, *Where We Live Now* (www.suddenly.org, 2009,) 12.
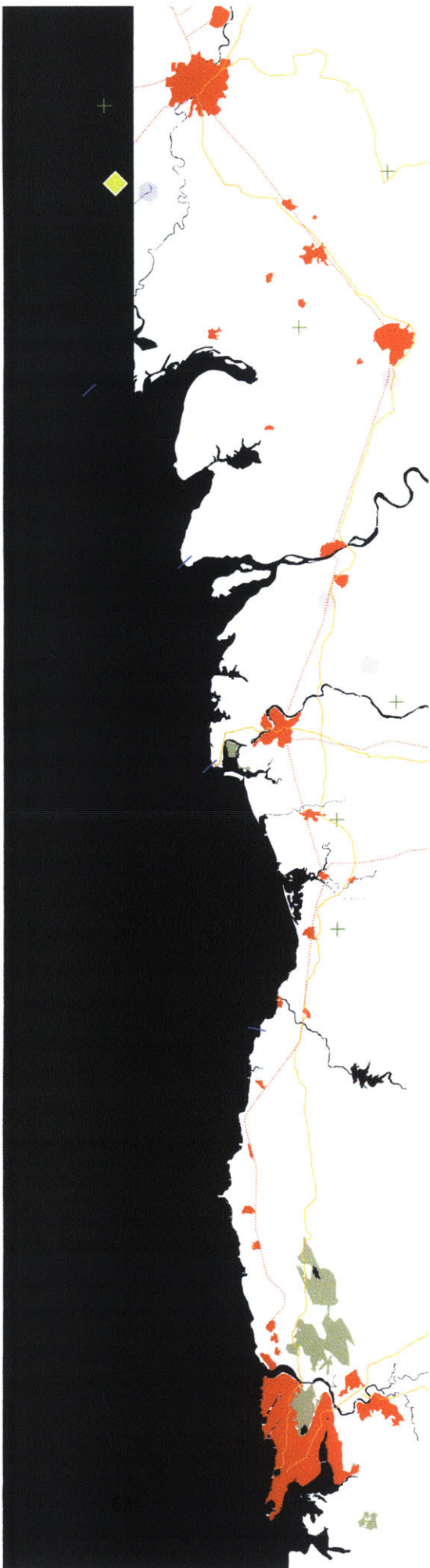
occupied glass and steel structure surrounded by grass fields-the drive in Mc Donald's advertising that it is in fact a 'family restaurant' stands out. Apart from the anomalous mall and occasional multistoried apartment complex, the continuity of the hybrid landscape on either side of the highway is striking. Large tracts of agricultural fields are dotted with factories, and grazing animals; groups of schoolgirls, factory workers and farmers walk or cycle by the side of the highway; steel wings of windmills whizz past rickety state transport buses, bullock carts and herds of sheep move slowly alongside the latest models of the Mercedes Benz.

The cities and towns occur at periodic intervals of 30-40 kilometers and have populations ranging between 20,000 and 150,000. They appear without warning or clear separation and possess myriad functions, some are industrial (Vapi), others related to agricultural processes (Navsari), surrounded by mango orchards and sugarcane fields, some are tourist destinations (Diu), yet others begin and end with the market street. In between them is a more or less analogous landscape of fields, factories, animals and town folk. The recently approved Special Economic Zone (SEZs), scattered along the highway comprise of green field conversions into speculative commercial complexes and housing developments. Their glass and steel skeletons appear awkward, not completely occupied, but already derelict, waiting to be assimilated into the diverse, yet continuous landscape. The highway makes visible the intricate connections between the many lives and diverse economies of these cities, while highlighting the contrasts that describe a burgeoning 'superpower'.

These types of hybrid landscapes, displaying conditions of both town and hinterland, modernity and tradition, high technology and primeval instincts can be found all over the country. Small cities exist simultaneously within these multiple conditions. They are at the same time industrial and agricultural, and possess both rural and urban characteristics, represented in a patchwork of industrial and

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commercial enterprises.[27]They are parts of networks of other smaller cities and villages in a region, often defined by a transport corridor and small scale economies. They might simultaneously function within the hierarchies determined by larger metropolitan areas and in relatively backward and predominantly rural regions define hierarchies of their own.[28]

Like the shrinking cities in the west they appear in a state of transition; it is often hard to ascertain at first glance whether they are on their way to becoming mega cities or undergoing a process of dis-urbanization. Depending on their location, the relative advantages or disadvantages within the region, the prospects of capital and the level state intervention and more recently, private investment, small cities in India are in fact experiencing both growth and deterioration. With the increasing presence of foreign markets, private enterprise, improved transportation, networking and telecommunications, small cities are finding themselves at the thresholds of globalization. The conditions and futures remain contrasting, while some small cities located in the more developed states, like Kerala, are experiencing the first stages of an Information Technology boom, others in backward states like Bihar and Orissa are struggling to provide basic amenities to their denizens.

Fig. 13 Travelling between Mumbai and Ahmedabad on the National Highway-8. Source: Author

27   Dennis A. Rondinelli, *Secondary cities in developing countries: policies for diffusing urbanization (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983)*, 64.
28   Stephen Morillo, "Autonomy and Subordination: the cultural dynamics of small cities," in *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian ocean Realm, c. 1400-1800*, ed. Kenneth R. Hall (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 18.
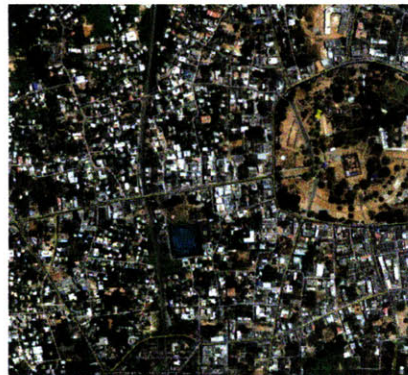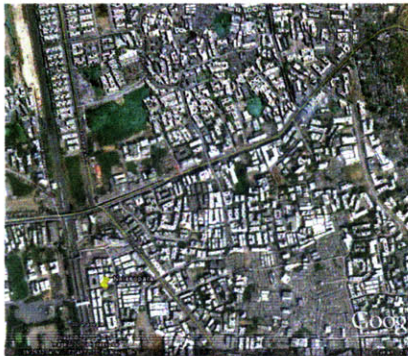
2.4.2 MORPHOLOGY AND URBAN LIFE

Small cities like other urban areas in the country developed without planning supported by the resource base of their hinterlands.[29]Traditionally these cities functioned as centers for collection and distribution. Many were important seats of power for provincial rulers in the early or medieval periods, cities like Nalanda, Jaunpur, Bijapur and Patiala have rich histories. Many after having lost their initial glory became headquarters of a district or continued to function as specialized trading posts, providing certain levels of services within the region. Most of them retained agriculture based economies, specializing in cash crops, while having incorporated certain smaller industrial processes.

The organic nature of their development becomes heightened as one moves outwards from the commercial core to the agricultural periphery. The core of the city is in fact the main street, or the market street. In most cases it is the historic trade route through the region that eventually caused the agglomeration of the villages in its path, spawning a town around itself. The market street becomes the primary organizing identity within the town, often named after Mahatma Gandhi, with his bust or statue marking the main traffic circle. The street has a concentration of activities and people. As the town grows, the market street might expand or shift, in larger higher order small cities, more than one commercial street might come to organize land use and public space.

The Main Street bustles with the anarchy of two wheelers, cycles, auto rickshaws and rickety buses. There is generally a paucity of cars on the road. The scale of the city enables most distances to be covered on foot or via smaller vehicles. Besides the commercial street, the

Fig. 14 Comparing Small City Fabric.
Source: Google Earth

29   Jayamala Diddee, ed., *Indian Medium Town: an appraisal of their role as growth centers* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1997), 17.

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railway station and the bus terminal occupy important physical and psychological locations within the city, as it continues to function as a place of transit between metro and village. It is the hometown of the expatriate or the metropolitan elite who might maintain a holiday home and a farmstead, returning time and again, home of students who have gone to larger cities for higher education. It also functions as the first stage of migration for individuals and families seeking to move finally to larger cities, the transition from a rural to an urban life often begins with seasonal migrations to these smaller cities.

2.4.3 ECONOMIES

The economies of small cities tend to be dominated by small scale commercial and service activities, while manufacturing related employment is limited to the small scale industrial sector. The informal sector has a marked presence, particularly on the streets which inevitably have two layers of commerce, the permanent rows of small eateries, confectioneries, general stores and beauty parlors offering similar everyday items and services, located on the ground floors of dilapidated buildings lining the street, followed by a second layer of informal commerce, cycle repair kiosks, fruit and vegetable venders, carts of toys, utensils, clothing and books, spilling out onto the road (in the absence of a foot path). The mingling of urban and rural activities can be seen in the periodic markets which continue to play an important part in the economic and social transactions between the neighboring villages and the cities. Depending on the settlement patterns surrounding a small city, these markets may attract buyers and sellers from distant rural and urban areas. These markets are important socio-cultural events in the life of the city, where the rural and the urban confront each other. They provide opportunities for the diffusion of knowledge, commodities and technologies. Some cities have a continuing tradition of the annual fair. Pushkar in Rajasthan, a
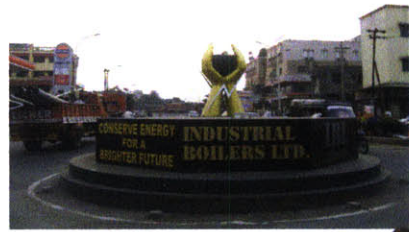

Fig. 15 Small cities between Mumbai and Ahmedabad.
Source: Author

Small Cities in India

pilgrim destination is also renowned for its annual Camel fair. Despite having become a popular tourist destination, for domestic and international travellers, it continues to play an important religious and economic role for the surrounding towns and villages.

The place of commerce becomes the default place for socializing and recreation. Despite being relatively small and surrounded by open land, small cities and towns display a very high density, particularly in the core areas. There is a prevalence of mixed use at the center with commerce at the street level and housing or small scale production on the upper floors. The lack of open space is marked, some cities might have a commemorative park named after a famous individual or small ponds might provide respite from a crowded urban scape. Many of these ponds are drying up or getting polluted in the absence of resources to maintain them. Some are even being encroached upon as space within the city is scarce. This is a strange dichotomy as the edges of the small city, generally located within a few kilometers from the center display an ambiguity and sprawl, marked by the ingress of agricultural activity, tracts of undefined open land and the occasional factory. These are interspersed with squatter settlements of rural migrants and other marginalized groups. Some of the agricultural land at the periphery is often marked out for residential development, but in the absence of personal resources and a stagnant or depleting population, these remain empty for years after the conversion in land use, some continue to be used for informal cultivation, others are occupied by squatters; a few houses built by foreign returnees or affluent residents stand out, giving the impression of an almost 'organic' sprawl.

2.4.4 RESITUATING SMALL CITIES

The experience of small cities could prove prophetic. In this mostly agrarian nation, they remain conduits of change between big city and countryside, linked to metropolises by itinerant elite and to rural villages by farmers who keep homes in town.[30]

There continue to be socio-cultural stigma's attached to small cities. Young people still view the big city as a place of escape from the traditionalism of small town life. They are still places with a relatively small number of choices in terms of material, academic and professional aspirations. There has been a marked migration of middle class families to larger cities and abroad. I have met several people between Mumbai and Cambridge, MA, working as domestic help or in beauty parlors and restaurants, who hail from small cities, like Vapi and Valsad in Gujarat, who have made the strategic choice of leaving small town life behind.

Recently a group of 150 businessmen purchased a Mercedes Benz each as a symbol of the growing wealth in the mid-size[31] city of Aurangabad, Maharashtra. It was a conscious attempt by young, successful entrepreneurs to bring notice to the benign city. This desire to flaunt new wealth is being recognized as a natural reflex as India moves towards prosperity. According to sociologists, it demonstrates a need for recognition, and physical manifestation of upward mobility, considered important when the relatively oppressed become more prosperous.[32]

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30   Anand Giridharadas. "India's small cities beat to a new consumerism," *New York Times* (July 5, 2005), www.nytimes.com/2005/07/04/world/asia/04iht-india (accessed on 17th May, 2011).
31   Aurangabad had a population of 1,208,285 in 2009. (Wikipedia)
32   Lydia Polygreen,"India's Smaller Cities Show off Growing Wealth," *New York Times* (October 24, 2010), http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/world/asia/24india (accessed on 17th May, 2011).

Heightened Infrastructure and Investment

While the case of Auragabad demonstrates the growth and success of the second tier cities in prosperous states and is telling of the stimulus consumerism and big city life is having on smaller urban areas, still smaller cities are also being exposed to global brands and lifestyles. With increasing connectivity, communication and investment, the provincial town is coming closer to metropolitan life, both physically and psychologically. With the spawning of mega highways and airports, the pervasiveness of internet and satellite television, the accessibility of small town India has increased manifold.

Fig. 16 Portion of the Golden Quadrilateral connecting Delhi and Gurgaon. Source: www.hotelierindia.com

In 1998, the ambitious Golden Quadrilateral project was conceived by the BJP, its announcement followed the nuclear tests at Pokhran. The project comprises on 5846 kilometers of national highway, extensive repairing and repaving of existing dilapidated stretches as well as the addition of new roads is estimated to cost US $ 13.3 billion almost 90% of the project has been completed, not without its share of controversy and critique. The project is akin to the British building of the extensive railway system in the last century, which defined the essential patterns of urbanization across the country. The 4-6 lane expressways circling the country pass through 13 states and through India's four largest cities. In between them it is bound to affect several small and medium sized cities, creating opportunities for investment, efficient movement of goods, agricultural produce and people. Already signs of entrepreneurship can be seen in the burgeoning of highway hotels, restaurants, petrol pumps and service stations. Almost all the land around the highway has been sold, making way for the installation of special economic zones catering to multiple processes.

Alongside the north-western stretch of the Golden Quadrilateral, the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor is another ambitious project aimed at instigating foreign and domestic private investment. The 90 million USD project is being engendered through financial and technical aid
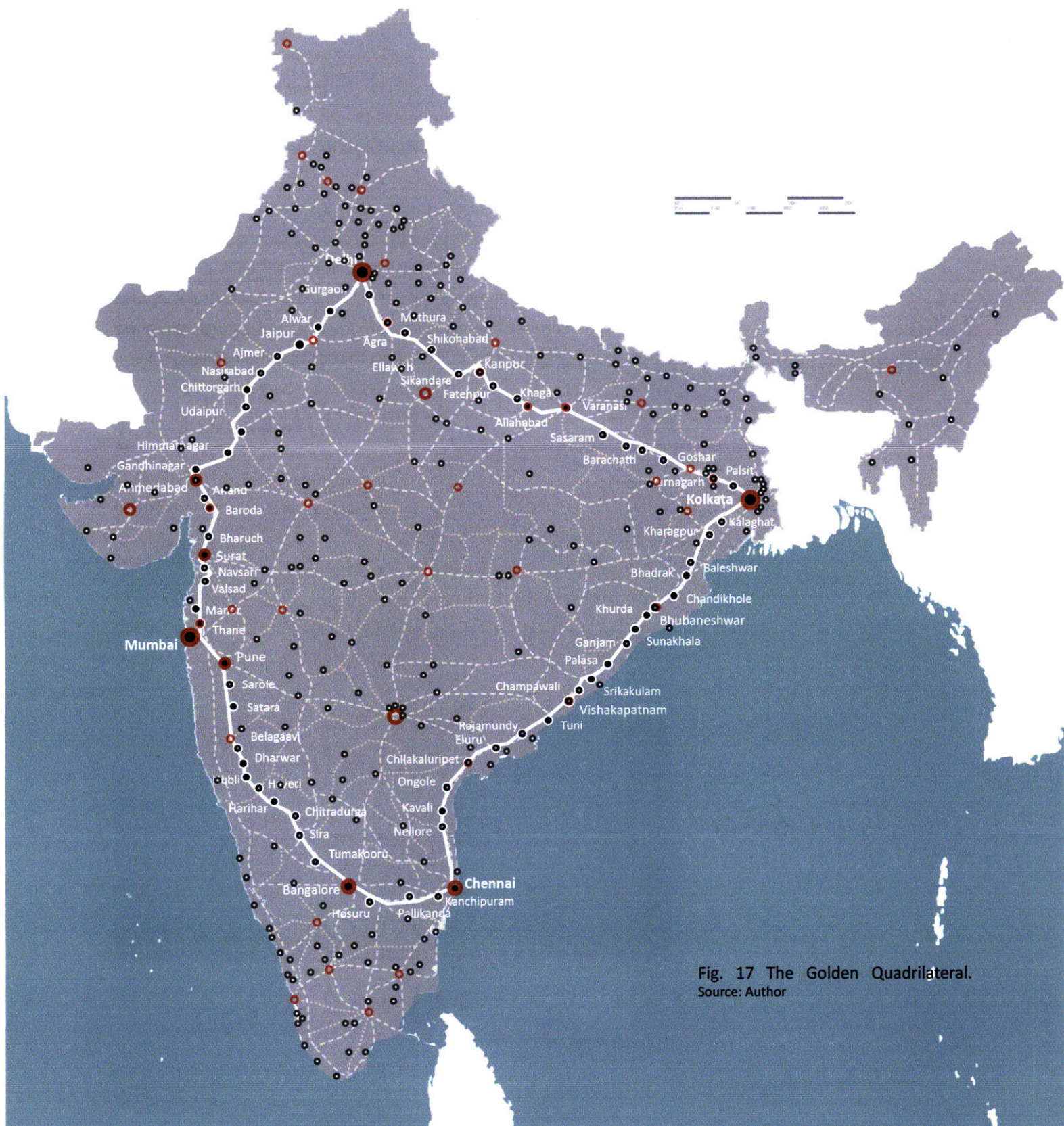
Fig. 17 The Golden Quadrilateral.
Source: Author

Fig. 18 A dedicated freight corridor.
Source: www.livemint.com

from Japan. It covers a length of 1483 kilometers between Delhi and Mumbai and comprises of nine, 200-250 square kilometers mega industrial zones, three new ports, six airports, a six lane intersection free expressway and a 4000 megawatt power plant, high speed passenger railway and multiple Special Economic Zones. It is estimated to affect almost 180 million people, 14% of the total population of the country, located within the 150 kilometer influence zone identified on either side of the corridor.

Other large scale projects at the national scale include the controversial Indian River Linking project which is to link 36 rivers in India to divert water from the major rivers likes the Ganges and the Brahmaputra in order to combat the problem of drought and floods, generate hydropower and irrigation. Estimated to cost between 70-200 million
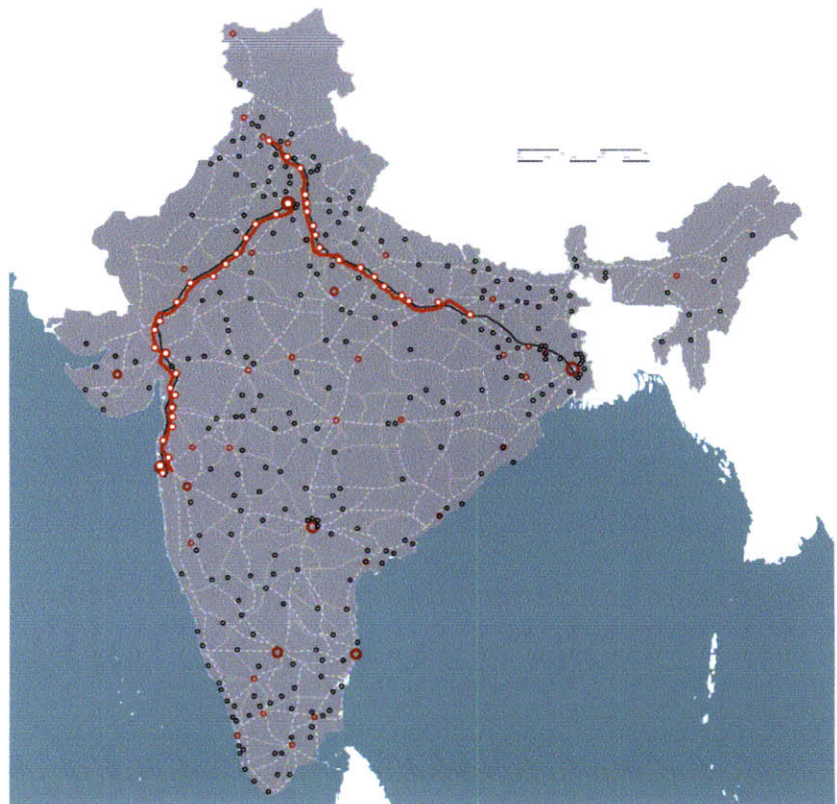
Fig. 19 Eastern and Western Frieght corridors. Source: Author

USD, the project which was conceptualized almost 60 years ago was authorized by the Supreme Court of India in 2002 and is finding fruition through private investment, incentives from the World Bank, and the grand vision of an Indian Super Power.[33]

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33   This project has been plagued by controversies related to the construction of dams, the extensive flooding that it will cause and the displacement of a large number of people. Besides troubles at home, Bangladesh has also expressed grave concerns on the potential impacts of the project on the economy and environment of the country as a bulk of the water from the project will come from the Brahmaputra and the Ganges.

Fig. 20 River Linking Project
Source: Author

The New York Times　　　**Asia Pacific**

India's Smaller Cities Show Off Growing Wealth

Fig. 21 Aurangabad displays its growing wealth. Source: www. nytimes.com

Fig. 22 Agricultural land being sealed off for land use conversion-setting it up for an SEZ

These mega projects signal a mindset for large scale development and the heightened ambition of attracting foreign investments. These projects and other smaller regional interventions, particularly in the developed states, will inevitable affect small town India. Economically it will mean that cities that fall in their path will become default beneficiaries of investment a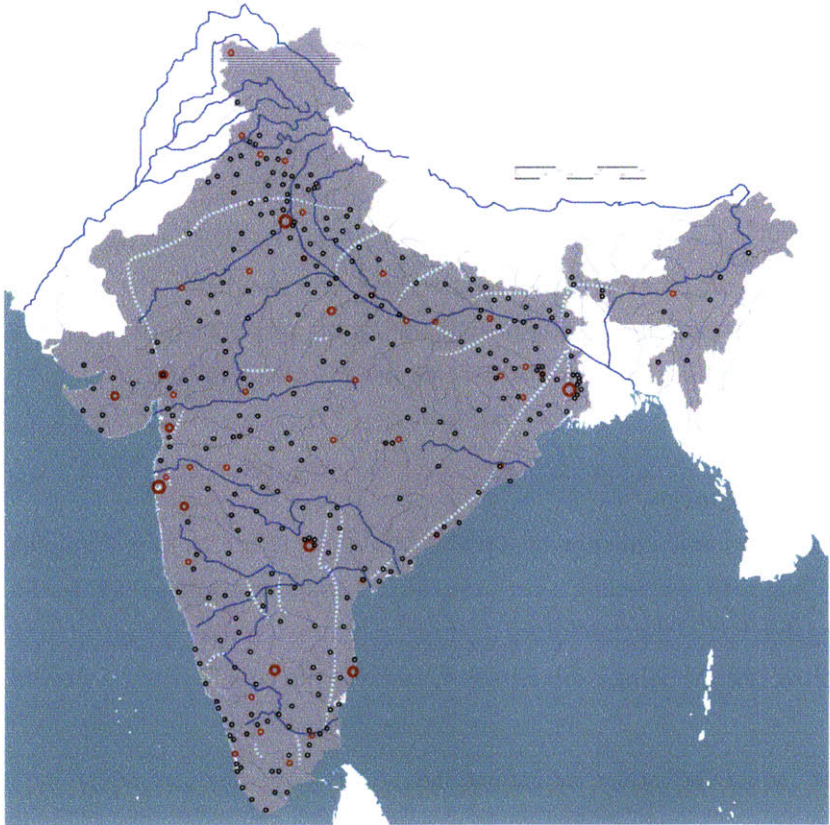nd industry. Culturally it is already bringing about huge psychological shifts. Upward mobility has brought with it an outward mobility[34] it has become common practice for the youth to aspire for higher education not only in the nearby metropolitan areas but also in the west. These multiple choices and exposures are causing a sort of domestic and international brain drain, where the middle classes, particularly the youth are increasingly seeking alternative lives in larger metropolitan areas. Better roads mean that many rural migrants are skipping the middle cities and heading straight for the squalor of metro. Increased connectivity might end up sapping the intermediate areas of their resources, making them even more subordinate within the settlement system, cities located near metropolitan areas risk losing all sense of identity and connection to the hinterland. Convenient highways and increasing wealth will inevitable increase automobile usage which might lead to the creation of dormitory suburbs as in western countries. Hence the opportunity presented by the intensified infrastructure is tremendous, but a certain degree of caution is required in its utilization, particularly with regards to the smaller cities and the delicate urban-rural interface.

Critical Mass

The economic concept of 'Critical Minimum Effort Theory'[35] implies a 'big push' exceeding a certain critical minimum effort, which would enable the emancipation of a city within a region. The infrastructural provocations being experiences in much of the country can be viewed

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34　Anand Giridharadas, *India's small cities.*
35　K. R. Dikshit, "The Large and Medium Cities in India," in *Indian Medium Town,* ed. Jayamala Diddee (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1997), 41.

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as a 'big push'. If small cities are able to plug into the systematic regional and national framework being imagined and increasingly put into place, they could in fact achieve self-sustaining growth. The question is how small cities should mobilize themselves for utilizing the opportunities presented and what the quantity and quality of the said critical mass should be.

Beninger argues that most micro level plans, such as associated with small city schemes and the more recent ambitions to create new smart cities and growth poles tend to be need based rather than resource based, catering to political aspirations and material expectations of the concerned areas, rather than the resources actually available.[36] Much investment is expected to come due to an increased psychological and physical connectivity. The investment then needs to be channelized intelligently throughout the region drawing from the particular conditions, resources and assets of the different cities. Though counter intuitive, given the current shift away from public sector enterprise to privatization, a regional body which instigates a balanced strategy would be beneficial. Simultaneously a deeper understanding of the kind of institutions needed to foster development, particularly related to the local cultures and social structures and relationship to the hinterland is needed. A focus on the institutional base of small cities by way of educational and medical services, parks and appropriate public spaces, hotels and cultural institutions, alongside private enterprise would curtail a predatory relationship, where large cities are able to exploit and usurp the functions of small cities because of the increased connectivity.
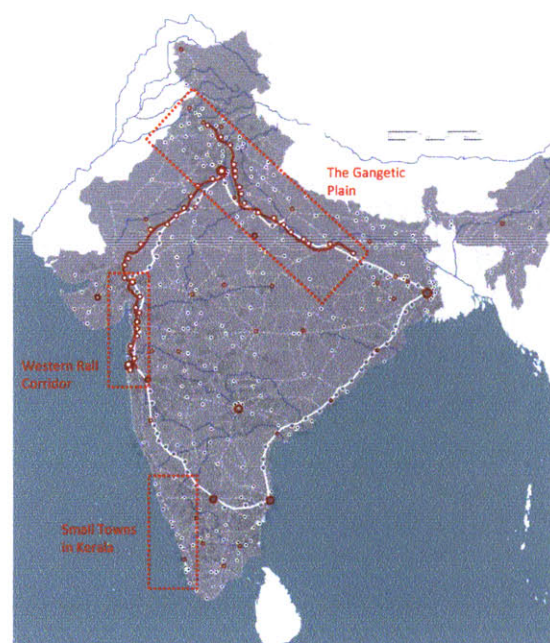
Fig. 23 Regions at the intersection of infrastructure and urbanization
Source: Author

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36   Christopher C. Benninger, "Towns in the Development Scenario," in *Indian Medium Town, ed. Jayamala Diddee* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1997), 48-53.

PROPOSITIONS

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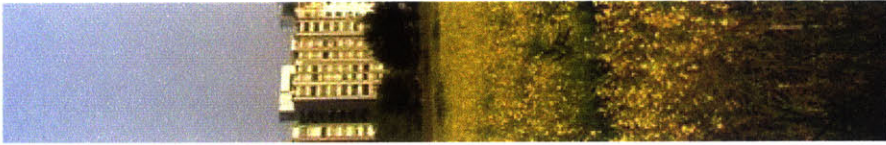
3 PROPOSITIONS

The preceding chapters have discussed the theoretical implications of city size and ground realities of small cities in India, resituating them in the present context. The following section is an application of this understanding on a particular small city, Navsari, Gujarat based on its particular conditions within the larger Mumbai-Ahmedabad region and its more local characteristics and resources. The propositions and more detailed project aim at finding common ground between the theories and realities of small cities.

India   Region   Sub-region   City
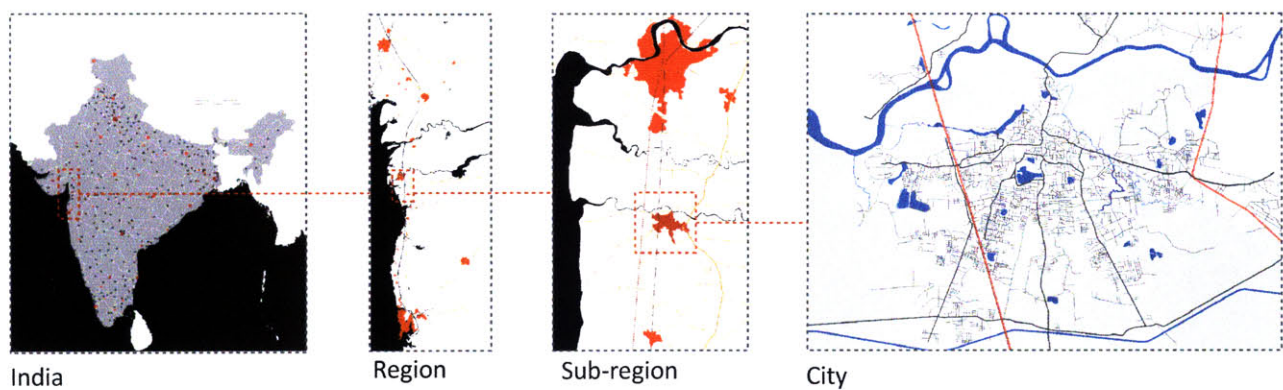
Fig. 1 Location of Navsari

Ahmedabad

NH-8

Western
Railways

Surat

Navsari

Arabian Sea

Mumbai

Petrochemicals

Textile based

Engineering

+ Agriculture based

◆ Gems & Jewelry

Fig. 2 The Ahmedabad-
Mumbai region

3.1 REGION-MUMBAI-AHMEDABAD

An analysis of the urban settlement pattern in India, with respect to the existing and proposed infrastructure networks and investment activity draws attention to a few regions which display a higher degree of interaction between the two. The corridor stretching between the mega city Mumbai and the million plus city, Ahmedabad, is one such region. Traversing the two states of Maharashtra in the south and Gujarat to the north, hugging the western coastline for a large part before entering semi-arid locales, the region displays settlements of different sizes and specializations, connected by history, commerce, culture and the more recent infrastructure additions.

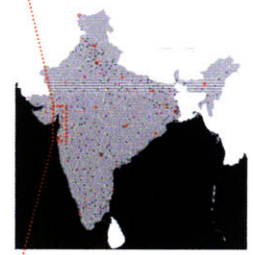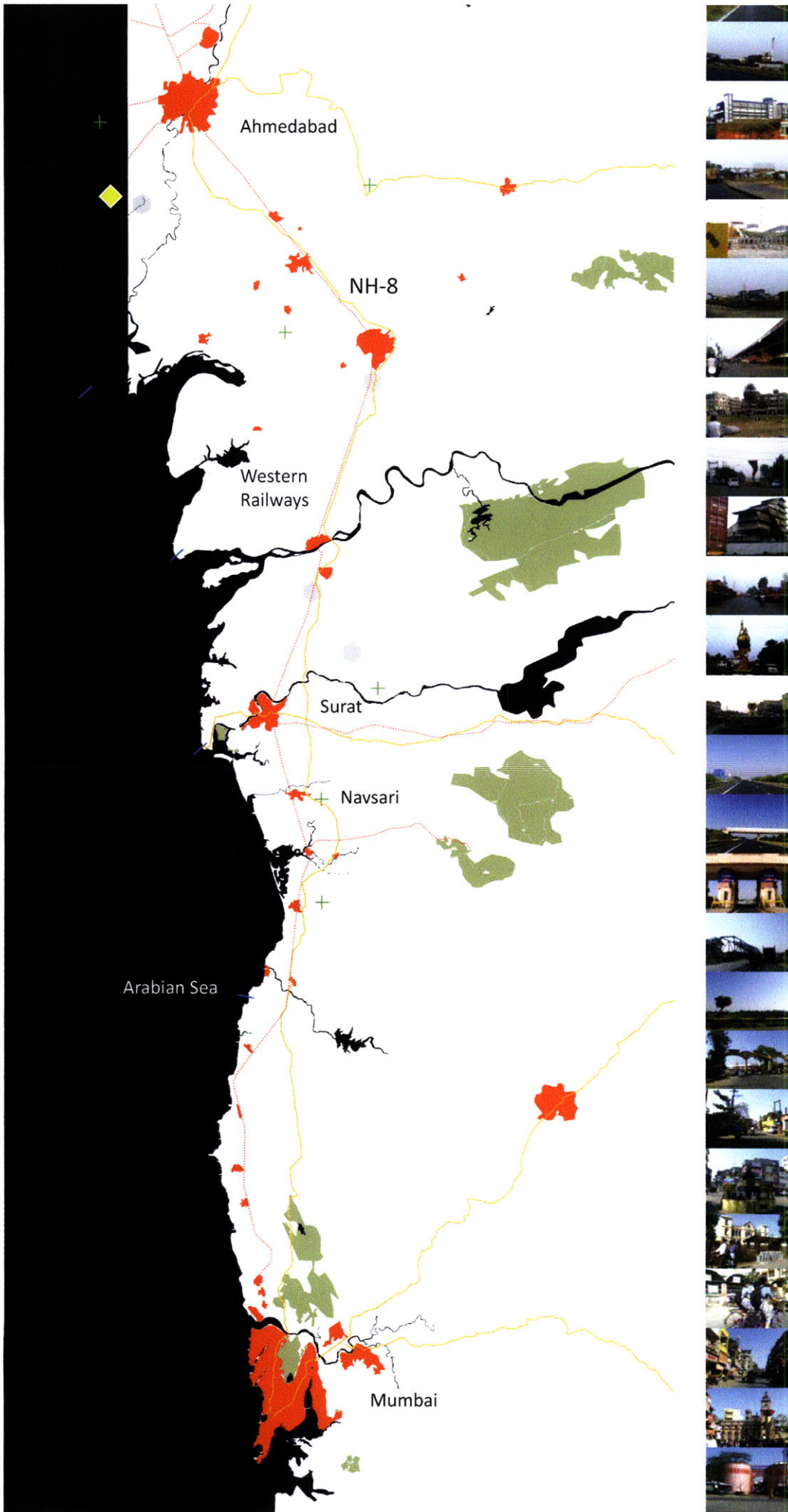Trade and transportation has been an important factor consolidating the region. The development of port cities like Mumbai, first as an important colonial outpost and now as a commercial and cultural capital within India, created a certain critical mass for the development and sustenance of smaller urban centers engagd in different activities. The variety of lifestyles, economies and culture that can be found along the region is fascinating, ranging from the largest film industry in the world to diamond cutting, mango farms, automobile parts and dairy products. In addition the coastal location made the region susceptible to colonizers and global migrating communities like the Parsis or Zoroastrians from Iran, the Dutch, Portuguese and the British, setting in place a cultural diversity experienced in language, religion and architecture.

While the Baroda and Central India Railway (BB & CI) was established during colonial rule in 1855, connecting Ankleshwar and Utran in Gujarat, the establishment of the Western Railway corridor in 1951 through the merging of several state owned railways, including the BB & CI, created a larger regional armature, which was eventually linked to the wider railway networks in north and central India. The corridor is also connected by road with the National Highway-8 (NH-8) passing through or besides the many cities in the region.
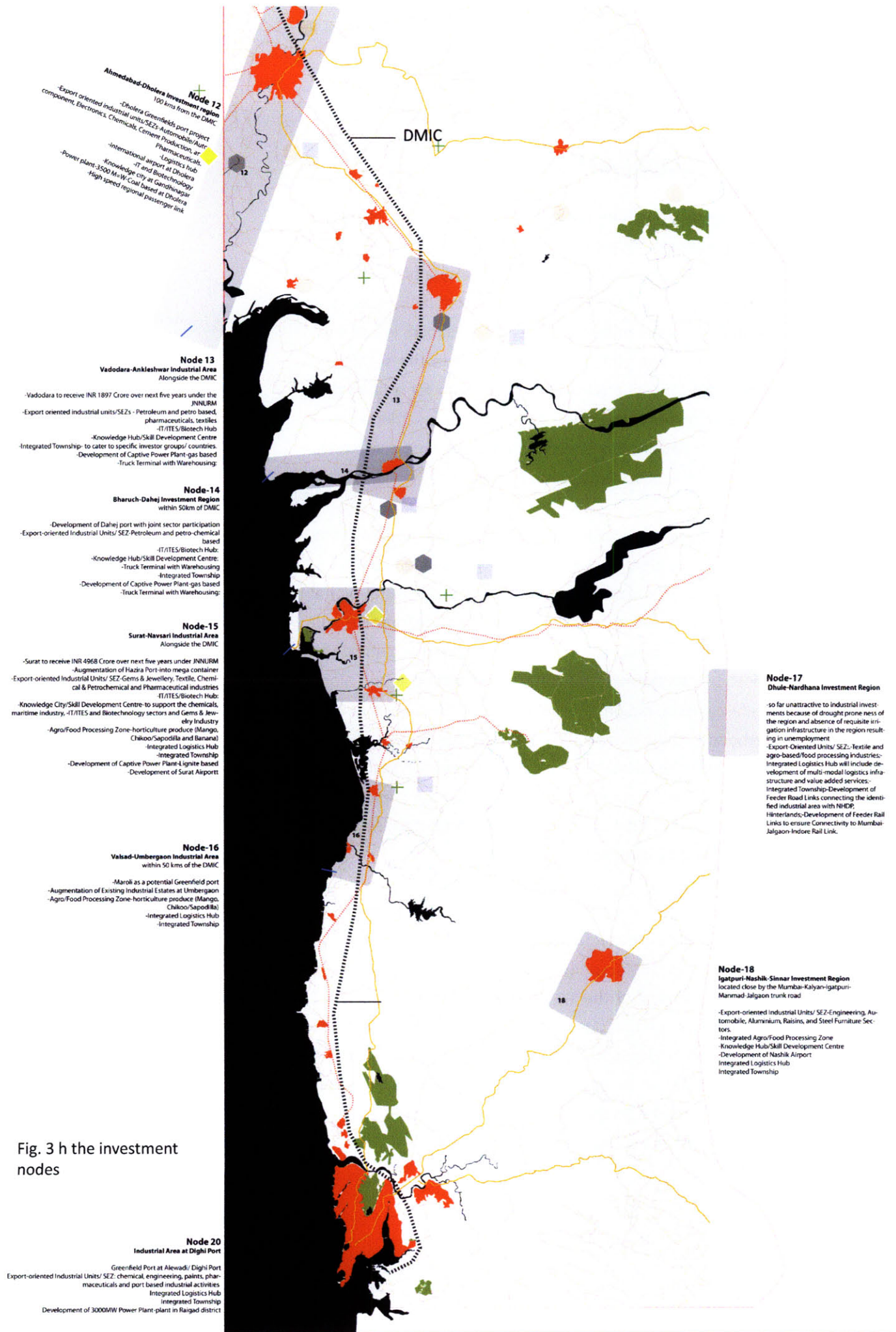
DMIC

Node 12

Ahmedabad-Dholera Investment region
100 kms from the DMIC

-Export oriented industrial units/SEZs -Automobile/Auto
component, Electronics, Chemicals, Cement Production, ar-
Pharmaceuticals,
-Dholera Greenfields port project
-International airport at Dholera
-Logistics hub
-IT and Biotechnology
-Knowledge city at Gandhinagar
-Power plant-3500 MeW Coal based at Dholera
-High speed regional passenger link

Node 13
Vadodara-Ankleshwar Industrial Area
Alongside the DMIC

-Vadodara to receive INR 1897 Crore over next five years under the
JNNURM
-Export oriented industrial units/SEZs - Petroleum and petro based,
pharmaceuticals, textiles
-IT/ITES/Biotech Hub
-Knowledge Hub/Skill Development Centre
-Integrated Township- to cater to specific investor groups/ countries.
-Development of Captive Power Plant-gas based
-Truck Terminal with Warehousing:

Node-14
Bharuch-Dahej Investment Region
within 50km of DMIC

-Development of Dahej port with joint sector participation
-Export-oriented Industrial Units/ SEZ-Petroleum and petro-chemical
based
-IT/ITES/Biotech Hub:
-Knowledge Hub/Skill Development Centre:
-Truck Terminal with Warehousing
-Integrated Township
-Development of Captive Power Plant-gas based
-Truck Terminal with Warehousing:

Node-15
Surat-Navsari Industrial Area
Alongside the DMIC

-Surat to receive INR 4968 Crore over next five years under JNNURM
-Augmentation of Hazira Port-into mega container
-Export-oriented Industrial Units/ SEZ-Gems & Jewellery, Textile, Chemi-
cal & Petrochemical and Pharmaceutical industries
-IT/ITES/Biotech Hub:
-Knowledge City/Skill Development Centre-to support the chemicals,
maritime industry, -IT/ITES and Biotechnology sectors and Gems & Jew-
elry Industry
-Agro/Food Processing Zone-horticulture produce (Mango,
Chikoo/Sapodilla and Banana)
-Integrated Logistics Hub
-Integrated Township
-Development of Captive Power Plant-Lignite based
-Development of Surat Airportt

Node-16
Valsad-Umbergaon Industrial Area
within 50 kms of the DMIC

-Maroli as a potential Greenfield port
-Augmentation of Existing Industrial Estates at Umbergaon
-Agro/Food Processing Zone-horticulture produce (Mango,
Chikoo/Sapodilla)
-Integrated Logistics Hub
-Integrated Township

Node-17
Dhule-Nardhana Investment Region

-so far unattractive to industrial invest-
ments because of drought prone ness of
the region and absence of requisite irri-
gation infrastructure in the region result-
ing in unemployment
-Export-Oriented Units/ SEZ:-Textile and
agro-based/food processing industries-
Integrated Logistics Hub will include de-
velopment of multi-modal logistics infra-
structure and value added services.-
Integrated Township-Development of
Feeder Road Links connecting the identi-
fied industrial area with NHDP,
Hinterlands;-Development of Feeder Rail
Links to ensure Connectivity to Mumbai-
Jalgaon-Indore Rail Link.

Node-18
Igatpuri-Nashik-Sinnar Investment Region
located close by the Mumbai-Kalyan-Igatpuri-
Manmad-Jalgaon trunk road

-Export-oriented Industrial Units/ SEZ-Engineering, Au-
tomobile, Aluminium, Raisins, and Steel Furniture Sec-
tors.
-Integrated Agro/Food Processing Zone
-Knowledge Hub/Skill Development Centre
-Development of Nashik Airport
Integrated Logistics Hub
Integrated Township

Fig. 3 h the investment
nodes

Node 20
Industrial Area at Dighi Port

Greenfield Port at Alewadi/ Dighi Port
Export-oriented Industrial Units/ SEZ: chemical, engineering, paints, phar-
maceuticals and port based industrial activites
Integrated Logistics Hub
Integrated Township
Development of 3000MW Power Plant-plant in Raigad district

For many people associated with the region, commercial and social life traverses state and individual settlement boundaries. These highly mobile traditions are of both historic and contemporary engendering and include both rural and urban people. Business men locate their factories in the myriad small cities and live in Mumbai or Surat, while others, like daily wage workers, live in the smaller towns or villages and work in the metropolitan area. Goods and people are constantly moving along the corridor, via air, water and land.

Today the region occurs at the confluence of several infrastructural and investment projects. The NH-8 is part of the ambitious Golden Quadrilateral, discussed in the previous chapter, further heightening the interconnectivity with the region and of the region to the rest of the country. With the proposal for the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) following the same route as the railways and the highway, the physical and psychological integration of the region in complete. Within the DMIC, several investment nodes have been identified (see map on facing page). The plan on paper is to refurbish the corridor with new power plants, logistic hubs, education facilities and high end housing development. High speed passenger trains and new airports will shorten distances, while the large number of Special Economic Zones will make it easier for foreign and domestic companies to set up businesses. Large tracts of agricultural land are in the process of being converted into industrial or residential use, or being usurped to carve out the new infrastructure lines.

Gandhinagar
2 Million
State Capital,IT, Finance

Ahmedabad
4 Million
Chemical, Pharmaceuticals,
Higher education

Anand
~300, 000
Dairy products

Vadodara
1.8 Million
Fine Arts and Technology

Bharuch
~1.5 Million
Port city

Ankleshwar
~70,000
Petrochemicals

Surat
5 Million
Commercial capital
Diamonds and Textiles, Port

Navsari
~140,000
District capital
Floriculture, Horticulture

Vapi
~120,000
Vapi Industrial Estate
Paper, Plastics, Glass

Daman and Diu
~240,000
Tourism, Fisheries, Port

Dahanu
~44,000
Sapodilla faming, Rice

Palghar
~53,000
Fisheries

Fig. 4 Cities in the region:
population and facets

Mumbai
21 Million

Fig. 5 Surat-Navsari sub-region

SURAT

NAVSARI

37 KM

Gems and Jewelry

Textiles

Approved SEZ

Western Railway Corridor

Horticulture Floriculture

Drugs and Pharmacueticals

Steel Textiles

Sugar

Salt

Proposed Dedicated Freight Corridor

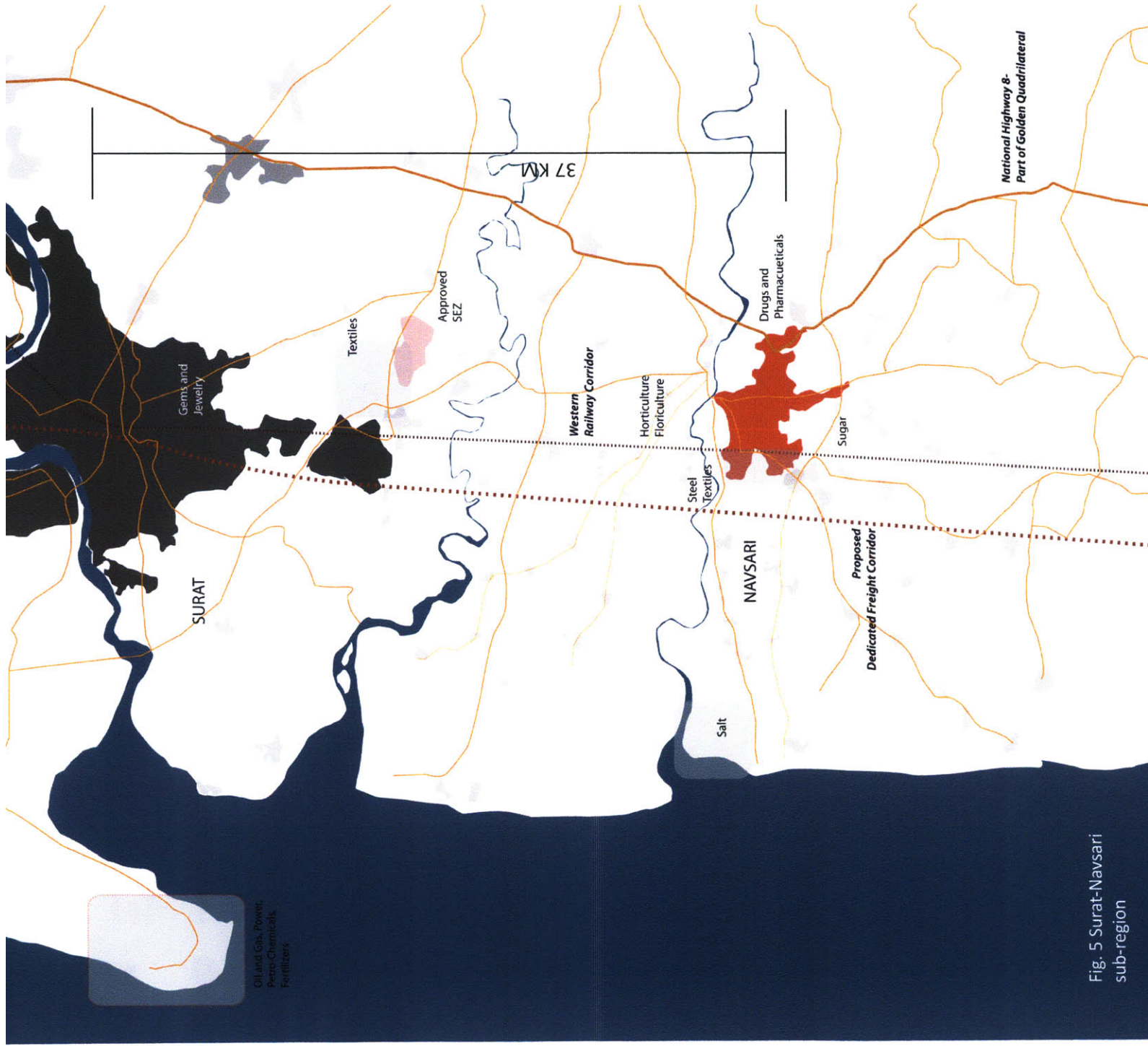National Highway 8- Part of Golden Quadrilateral

Oil and Gas, Power, Petro-Chemicals, Fertilizers

3.1.1 SURAT-NAVSARI SUB-REGION

The Surat Navsari region is proposed to be developed as an industrial area under the DMIC. The sub-region describes a networking between settlements of different sizes and functions, with a prominence of the metropolitan area, followed by the smaller secondary cities, including Navsari located 37 kilometers to the south of it, which continues to maintain an important relationship with the many villages between the two cities. While Surat has developed as an industrial city with textiles, petrochemicals and more recently diamond processing as the mainstays, Navsari's economy is based on agriculture and related activities.

Surat recorded the fastest population growth rate among metropolitan cities in India between 1991 and 2001. High immigration to the sub-region, particularly from states in north and the east attributes to an above average rate of urbanization as compared to the rest of the country. Gujarat has been in the forefront in implementing structural reforms since liberalization in order to become itself attractive for investment. Surat has benefited manifold and has been able to mobilize central and state funds under the JNNURM scheme discussed in chapter 2. Improvements in city infrastructure and foreign investment are a clear manifestation of the same. From a history of dismally low sanitary standards which had cause a plague outbreak in the 1980s, to a city which personifies prowess, Surat is a witness to the changes brought on by liberalization in the country.

The city emanates substantial influence in the area and recently the Gujarat government has launched a proposal to develop Surat-Navsari as twin cities.[1] The plan, though in nascent stages, would subsume Navsari and the surrounding villages in order to create a larger urban agglomeration, which would eventually compete with Mumbai and Delhi. Surat already has a population of around five million people,

Fig.6 Possible patterns of growth of sub-region.

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1   Utpal Sharma, *Sub Regional Plan for Surat-Navsari,* (Ahmedabad: CEPT, 2011), 1-4.

Fig.7 Navsari-proximity of agriculture to the city. Source: www.imageshack.us

and though it has benefited from an increase in urbanization, the problems typical to mega cities can also be seen.

For Navsari, a historic, provincial town, the twin-city project would mean that it would become a residential suburb serving the larger city. Still, my conversations with administrative officers and people in the Navsari Town planning department sensed a general preference for this scheme. This might stem from the general stigma associated with small city culture, compounded by the fact that through agglomeration, Navsari would become eligible for funds, which might bypass it today.

1 5 10 KM

Purna River

Western Railway

NH-8

Navsari
Agricultural University

Fig. 8 **NAVSARI City**

3.2 CITY-NAVSARI

Navsari is a quintessential small city with a population of about 140,000 people, a dense urban center that stretches for about seven kilometers in the east west direction before merging into agricultural fields and about two kilometers in the north south direction, bound by the Purna river in the north an irrigation canal in the south.

Navsari derives a strong identity from its history and economy. An old urban center, its history can be traced back to almost 2000 years. The Parsis or Zoroastrians arrived in Navsari in 1142[2] and are a prominent part of its social life. The economy of Navsari is dominated by agriculture and food processing. Sugarcane, Sapodilla, Mango abounds in the areas surrounding the city. Floriculture has benefited from the opening up of the Indian economy with many local businesses expanding and even exporting flowers abroad. There has been some efforts at bring bio-fuels through the production of Jaltropa in the area. The Navsari Agricultural University is a modest institution located in the south west of the city, providing a mix of research and production. Hence within an agricultural base there is both the traditional food production and a growing inclination towards newer trends related to research and technology.

In performing the traditional role of a small secondary city, Navsari also hosts weekly agricultural markets where farmers from neighboring areas sell their produce. It has some higher order services to offer to the rural population, like the agriculture university, several hospitals, including a famous eye hospital, banks and civic institutions, like the Nagar Palika or municipal office.

Navsari's growth has been slow, over time it has agglomerated some of the villages in its territory to attain the status of a municipality. Yet a number of small hamlets surround the city, some within a radius of less than a kilometer, distinct in their morphology and culture, yet well connected to the city.

www. navsarinagarpalika.com

Fig.9 Street Scene-1900
Source: www.meherjiranalibrary.com

Fig.10 Views of the city

Fig.11 One of the *Talavs* or retention ponds in the city

3.2.1 MAPS

Navsari has an amorphous peripheral condition, with a juxtaposition of agriculture and urbanism. While agricultural fields take over after a point, marked in dark green, the spaces in between the formal farmland and the city have an interesting hybrid character. Peripheral agricultural land is converted for speculative urban use, but in smaller city it often remains unoccupied for long periods, giving rise to urban farming. In addition, the proximity of villages and agro-processes means that several orchards and plantations continue to penetrate into the city.
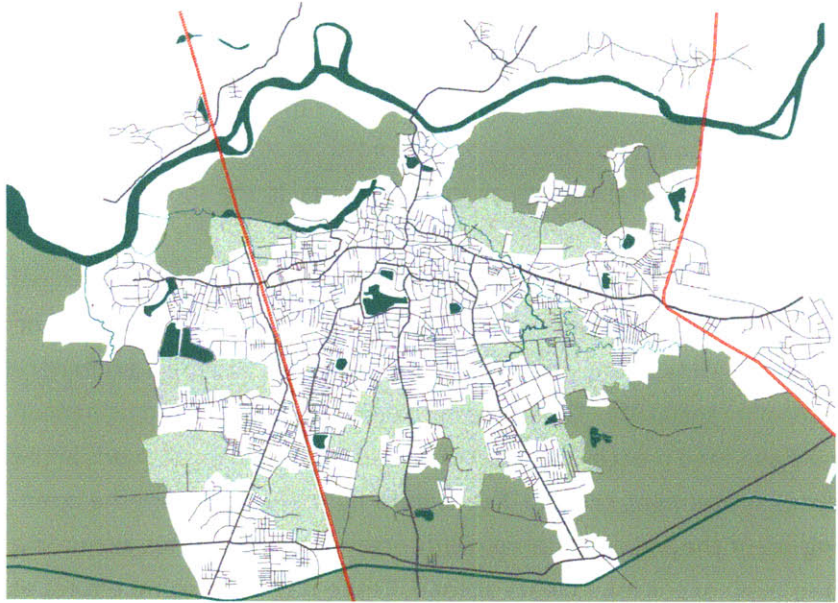
Fig.12 Agriculture with respect to the city
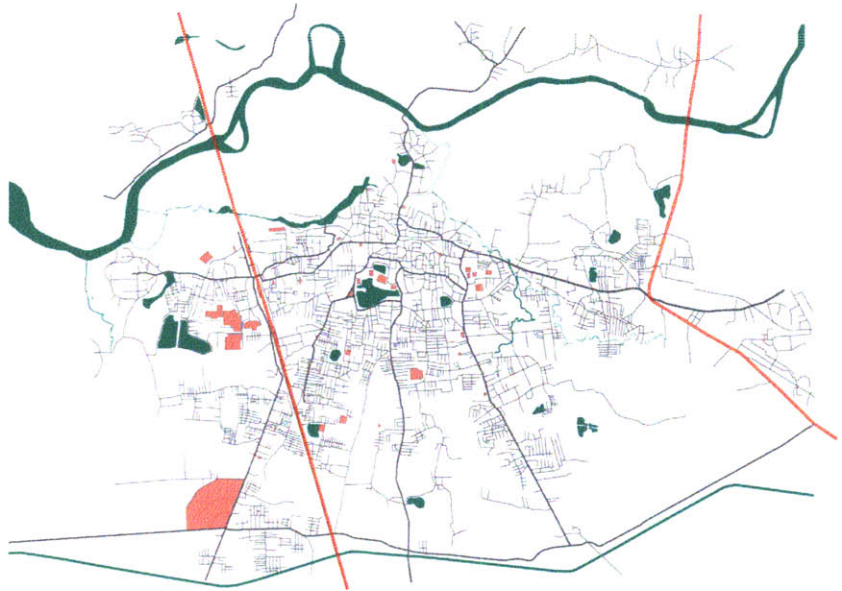
Fig.13 Institutions

Sagarika Suri
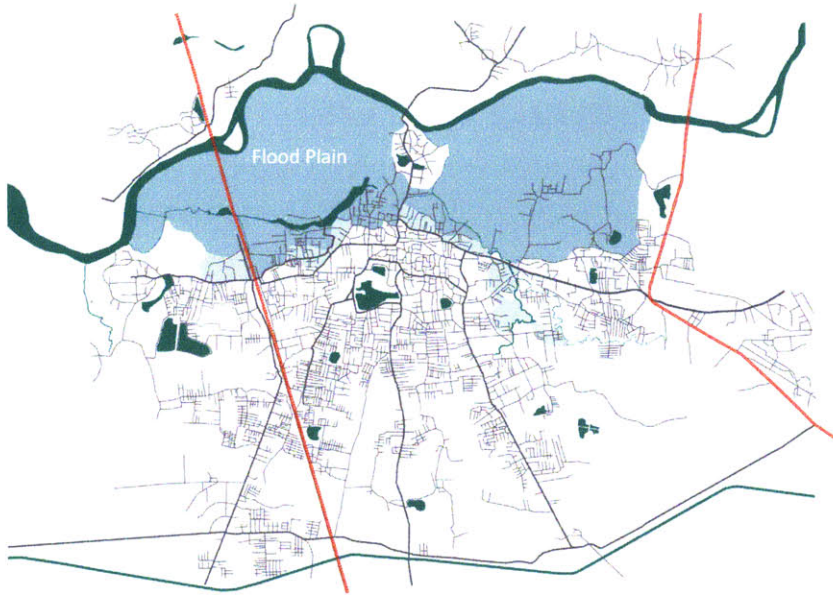
Fig.14 Water systems

The northern edge of city is clearly defined by the Purna River flood plain. Because of the small size and slow growth of the city, the floodplain has not been encroached by development and is clearly defined between the city and the river. In addition, the city has a number of retention ponds that provide spatial release in an otherwise congested urban fabric. They are important for the water supply of the city, but have not been integrated into the public sphere.

Fig.15 Network of villages

800 M

800 M

FLOODPLAIN +
AGRICULTURE +
REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

FLOODPLAIN +
AGRICULTURE

FLOODPLAIN +
AGRICULTURE +
RESIDENTIAL

RESIDENTIAL +
INSTITUTIONAL + CIVIC
+ COMMERCIAL

RESIDENTIAL +
INSTITUTIONAL +
CIVIC + COMMERCIAL +
RETENTION PONDS

RESIDENTIAL +
OPENLAND

RESIDENTIAL +
AGRICULTURE
+INFORMAL
SETTLEMENTS

RESIDENTIAL +
AGRICULTURE+
PROCESSING
INDUSTRIES

VILLAGE +
AGRICULTURE+
REGIONAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

AGRICULTURE

3.2.2 MORPHOLOGY

Fig.16 Floodplain-Agriculture

Fig.17 Inner City: A combination of residential, commercial and institutional use in both the hroizontal and vertical

Fig.18 Main City: A more organized layout, with the retention ponds offering respite from high density
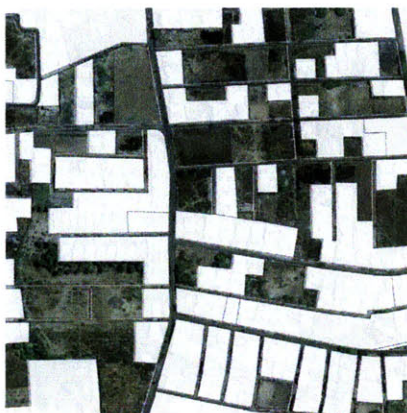
Fig.19 Periphery: Vacant lots, dispersed housing development

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Fig.20 Periphery: Vacant lots, some amount of urban farming
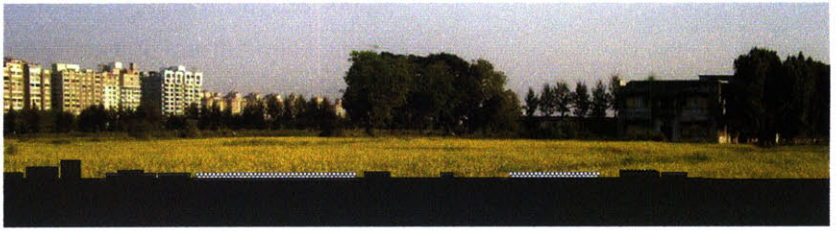
Fig.21 Periphery: Agricultural production and processing with some residential use

Fig.22 Villages

Fig.23 Agriculture

3.3 PROPOSITIONS

The Ahmedabad-Mumbai region is characterized by a coherence afforded by geographical continuity and an infrastructural armature. Simultaneously a diversity of settlement sizes, economic activity, lifestyle and culture within this unity creates conditions for myriad urbanisms to develop informed by the local conditions. While mega cities like Mumbai and Ahmedabad offer the experience of a hyper urbanism, cities like Navsari could provide a balance by remaining connected to the hinterland, which continues to thrive in between.

In analyzing the specific conditions of Navsari, its agricultural base stands out, both in terms of institutional frameworks, provided by the modest agricultural university and the network of villages surrounding it as well as in the morphology of the city, where farming persists both in a formal and informal manner in and around the city. This interesting hybrid condition in tandem with the expected investment and attention to follow the ambitious projects in the region creates potentials for an urbanism rooted in agriculture yet connected to the city: an urbanism that is productive, recreational and responsible.

The proposition is for streamlining the investments to focus on those based on floriculture, horticulture and other cash crops, converting bio-resources into wealth. The interest in bio-technology already taking form through bio-fuels and plant-based pharmaceuticals should be harnessed by developing a strong research base through the university. In keeping with the spirit of liberalization, these research and education endeavors need not be limited to the public sector. Private institutions and research labs should be encouraged to set up shop and form a symbiotic relationship with the existing education institutions.

The restructuring of industrial jobs brought on by new high tech enterprises and the growing unsustainability of agriculture based employment has left the traditional workers de-industrialized and the migrant labor from the countryside jobless. The provision of rural outreach through training facilities to help the rural migrant transition to an urban livelihood is essential. Navsari continues to be an important center for rural populations from around the territory for higher level services like education, banking and more specialized markets. By developing rural outreach for training farmers and rural youth in the ways of globalization, Navsari could help make the rupture from rural to urban less traumatic.. Given the dismal state of agriculture in the country[3], investment in agriculture related programs, education and business could provide an identity and renewed purpose for Navsari within the region.

---

3   Between 1997 and 2009, India recorded 200,000 farmer suicides. Though 70% of the country is rural, with 50% employed in agriculture yet it generates only 16% of the total GDP, this has fallen from 25% of GDP in the late 90s. In addition there is a failing food security, with India having to import basic grains and pulses. There are several reasons for this; cultivable land is shrinking, especially as more and more prime agricultural land gets appropriated for special economic zones and industrial activities. Most of the land holdings are very small and not sustainable, in addition small scale farmers are unable to keep up with or even afford modern technology.

3.3.1 PROGRAM

EDUCATION / RESEARCH / ENTERPRISE

PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING

Agriculture University

-Extension to existing university
-Affiliation to private enterprises
-New products
-Environmental Science division

-Floriculture-
Hyroponics
-Horticulture
-Vegetables

-Agricultural business and Management

-Information and Communication Technology training for the rural population

Biotechnology/Pharmaceuticals

-Herbal Medicines
-Medicinal plants
-Bio Diesel (Talsadi-using Jatropha)

Outsourcing-
'Biological/Agricultural software'

-Hybrid seeds
-Tissue Culture
-Organic Farm Products

Developing Biological Software-
-Converting bioresources into wealth

Utilizing the biodiversity of the extensive, undeveloped floodplain
-Environmental Management of floodplain along+economic and social benefits

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RURAL OUTREACH   RECREATION AND FACILITIES

Education for farmers
-Ideal practices
-Use of modern equipment
-Knowledge of subsidies and rights

-Sports facilities (relatively few designed open spaces in Navsari)

-Polyvalent Ghats for public gatherings

-Space for weekly markets

-Outreach centres for the rural population

Contact between farmers and farmers' cooperatives, organizations and external agricultural enterprises

Urban condition arising from the juxtaposition of agriculture and agriculture related activities with the civic life of the city

Prototype of a hybrid urban space comprising of-education-wealth generation-rural urban interface-recreation-identity

Corporate Responsibility

City Identity as associated with agricultural prowess

Regional Food Security

Regional diversity

Fig.24 Program statement

1

The proposition stems from the existing morphological character of the southern peripheries of the city. Guiding the growth of the city by channelizing the investments and agriculture related institutions and migrant housing along the existing radiating roads, and developing the space in between them for agricultural production, in essence allowing the ingress of agriculture into the city.

Fig.25 Proposition 1: Diagram

2

The retention ponds afford an opportunity to create identifiable public space within the city. they are currently underutilized because of negligence and the prevalence of residential development around them. In critiquing the location of new investment along highways, disconnected from the urban areas, this proposition proposes that the ponds be developed as nodes within the city, creating a system where businesses and institutions could be set up within the city.

Fig.26 Proposition 2: Diagram

3

The neatly delineated floodplain along the northern periphery of the city is a resource at the confluence of various opportunities. It has a strategic location and due to the relatively flat terrain, it is well connected to the city. It has a biodiversity which is currently being used for small scale farming activity. By channelizing development along the northern edge, in the form of agriculture related businesses, research institutions, rural outreach centers and maximizing the production capacity of the floodplain, the propositions is for a project for simultaneous flood management and resource utilization.

Fig.27 Proposition 3: Diagram

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3

3.3.2 PROJECT

Components of Design

Institutions
Bussinesses/Education/Commerce/
Migrant Housing/ Processing

Public space
Recreation/Markets/Sports

Blocks

Circulation
Roads/ Dykes

Production
Farms/ Floods

Navsari

Flood Plain
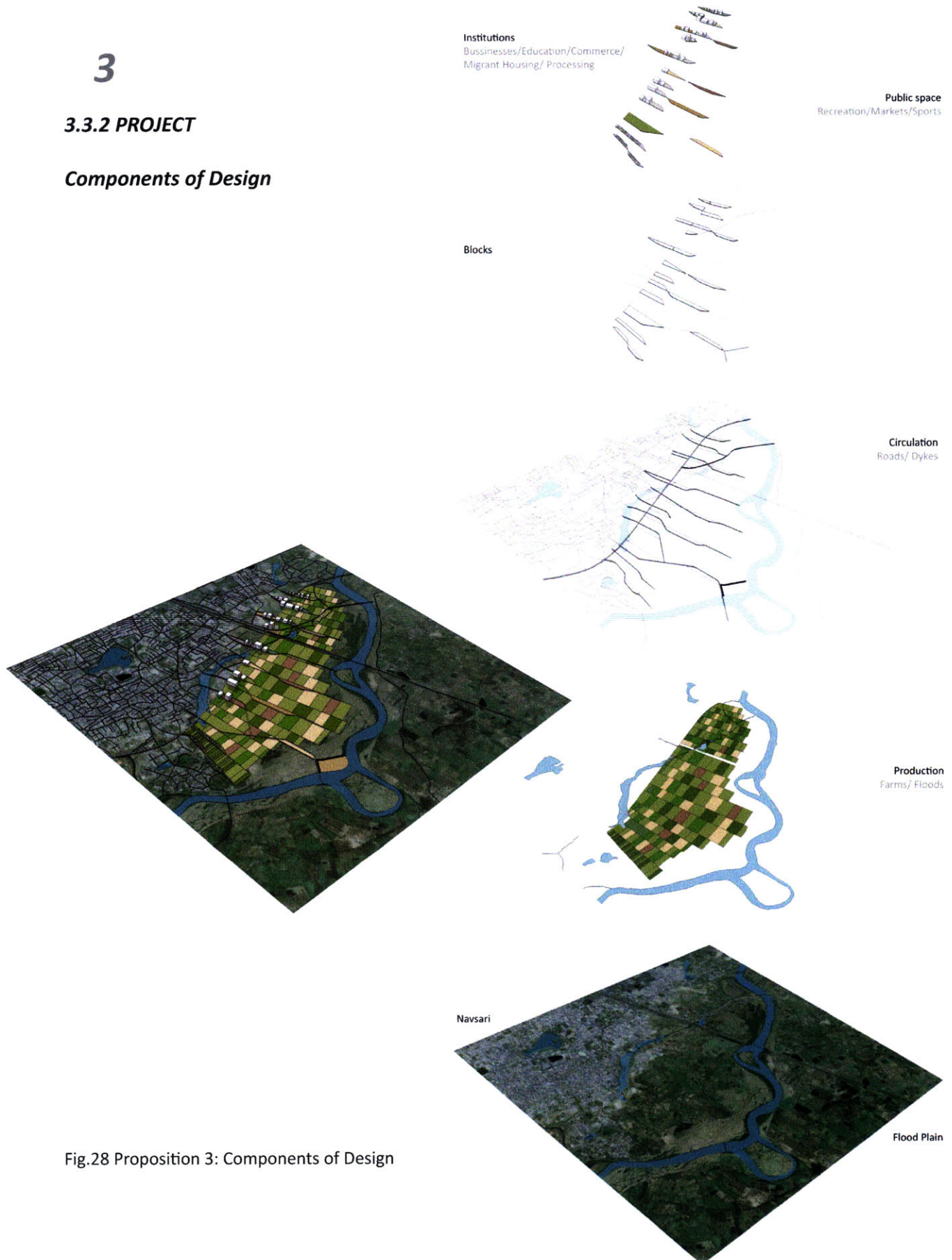
Fig.28 Proposition 3: Components of Design
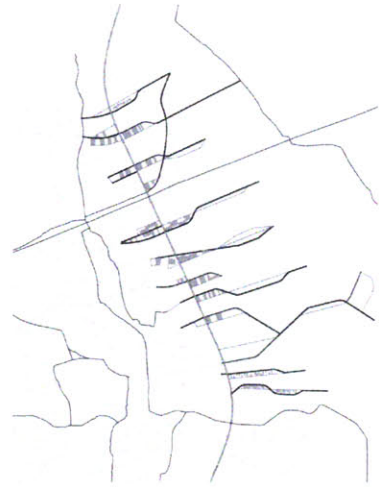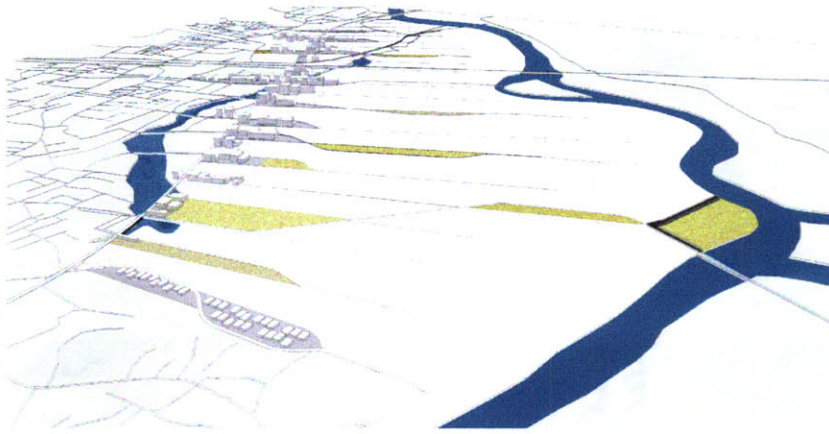
Fig.31 **Development:** Education, Research, Business, Processing,
Rural Outreach, Migrant Housing
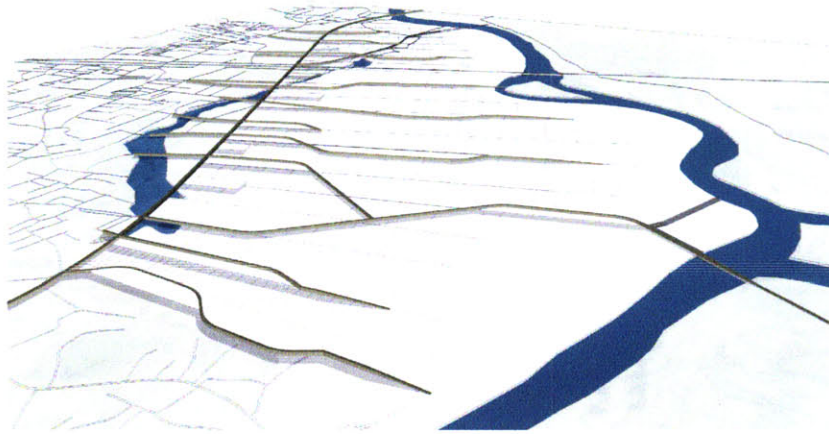**Recreation:** Periodic Markets, Sports fields, Festival Grounds, Gardens

Fig.30 **Infrastructure**: Roads, Plinths, Connections to the city
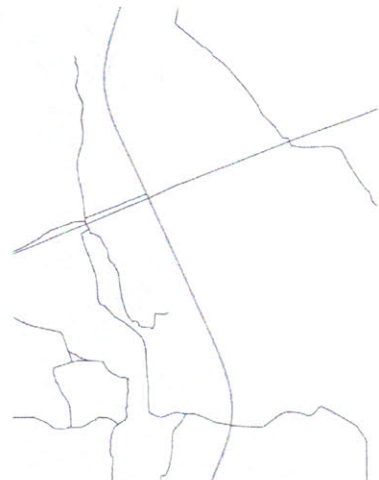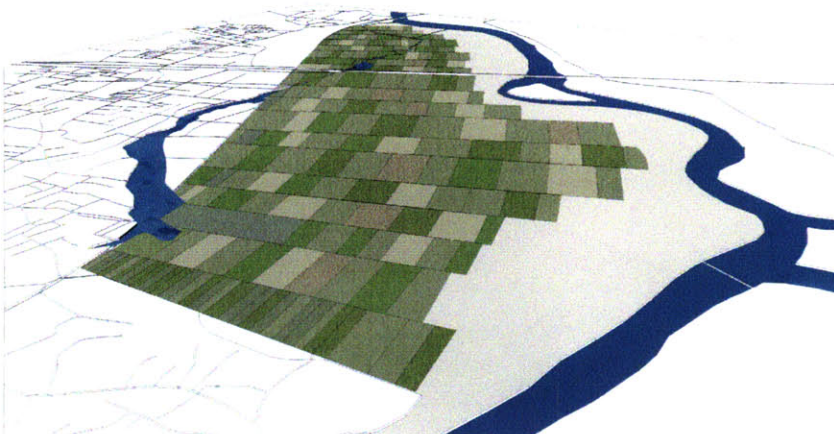
Fig.29 **Fields:** Production, Cultivation, Research

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The Purna River Floodplain:

The institutions along the spine utilize the floodplain for production and research. An armature of roads, elevated from the floodplain allows strategic access for the institutions and the city. A network of public space, elevated from the floodplain and accessed by the roads provides much needed domain for periodic events, like the farmers markets, annual fairs and sports. They provide recreation spaces for the dense city through the temporary and strategic occupation of the flood plain.

Fig.33 Weekly Market in the floodplain

The proposal respects the floodplain by programming it for use as a productive landscape and by its temporary occupation by the city. The new buildings are located strategically along the edge, defining a type of new 'Main Street' for Navsari, along the northern edge, and mediating between the two conditions of landscape and dense urbanism. Flood management is a function of leaving the plain undeveloped; the infrastructure here provides elevated access, with connections to the plain itself. A more detailed project could follow for creating dykes that retain or divert the flood water, for comprehensive management.
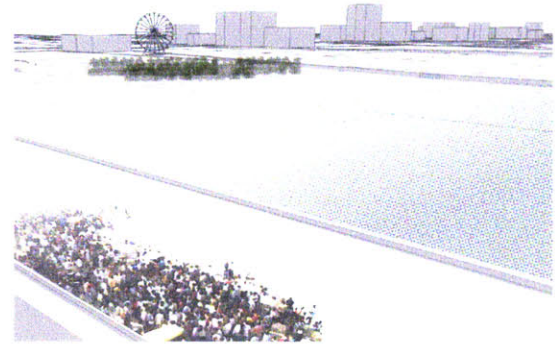
Fig.32 Illustration of Project

Village
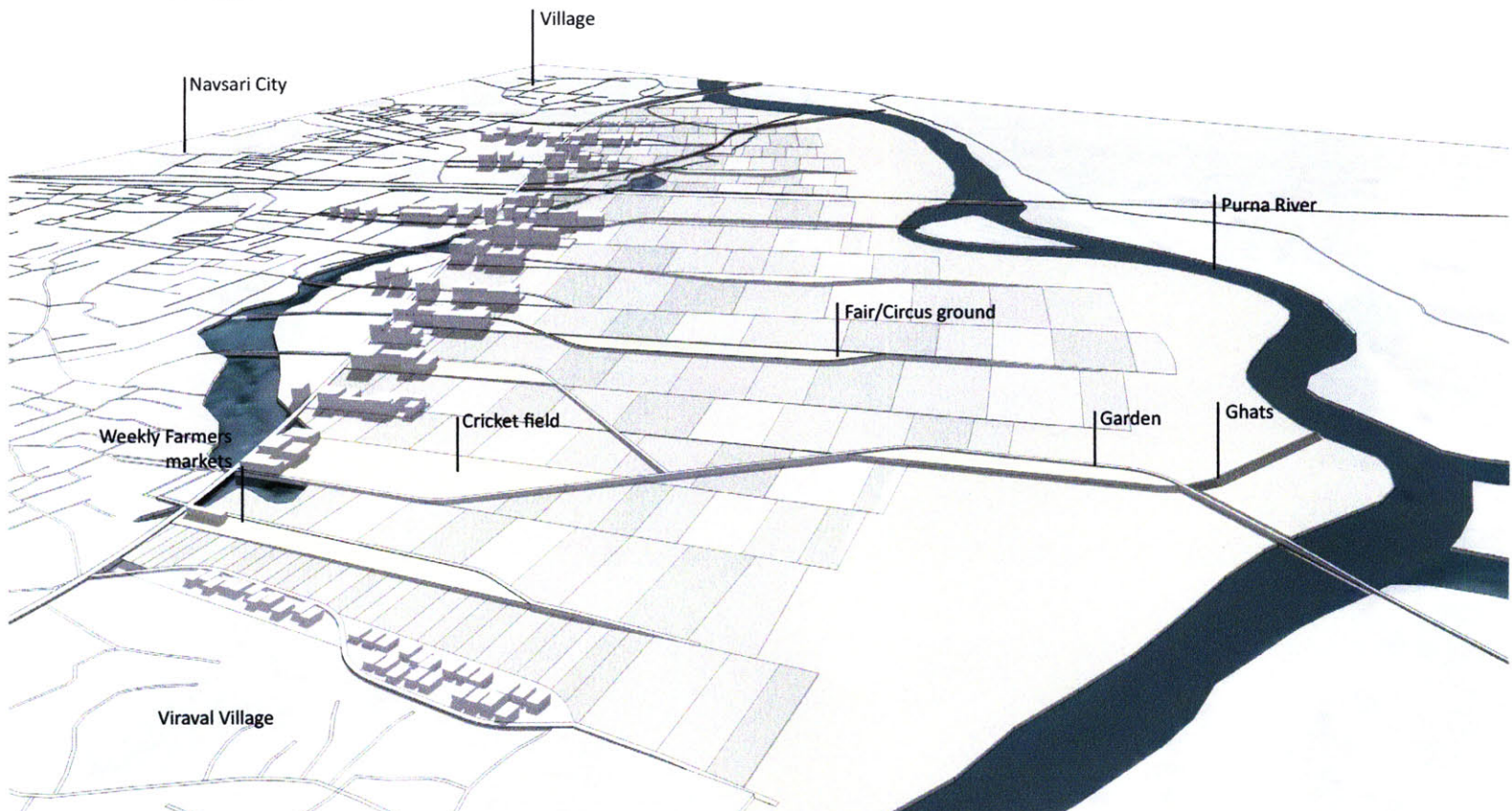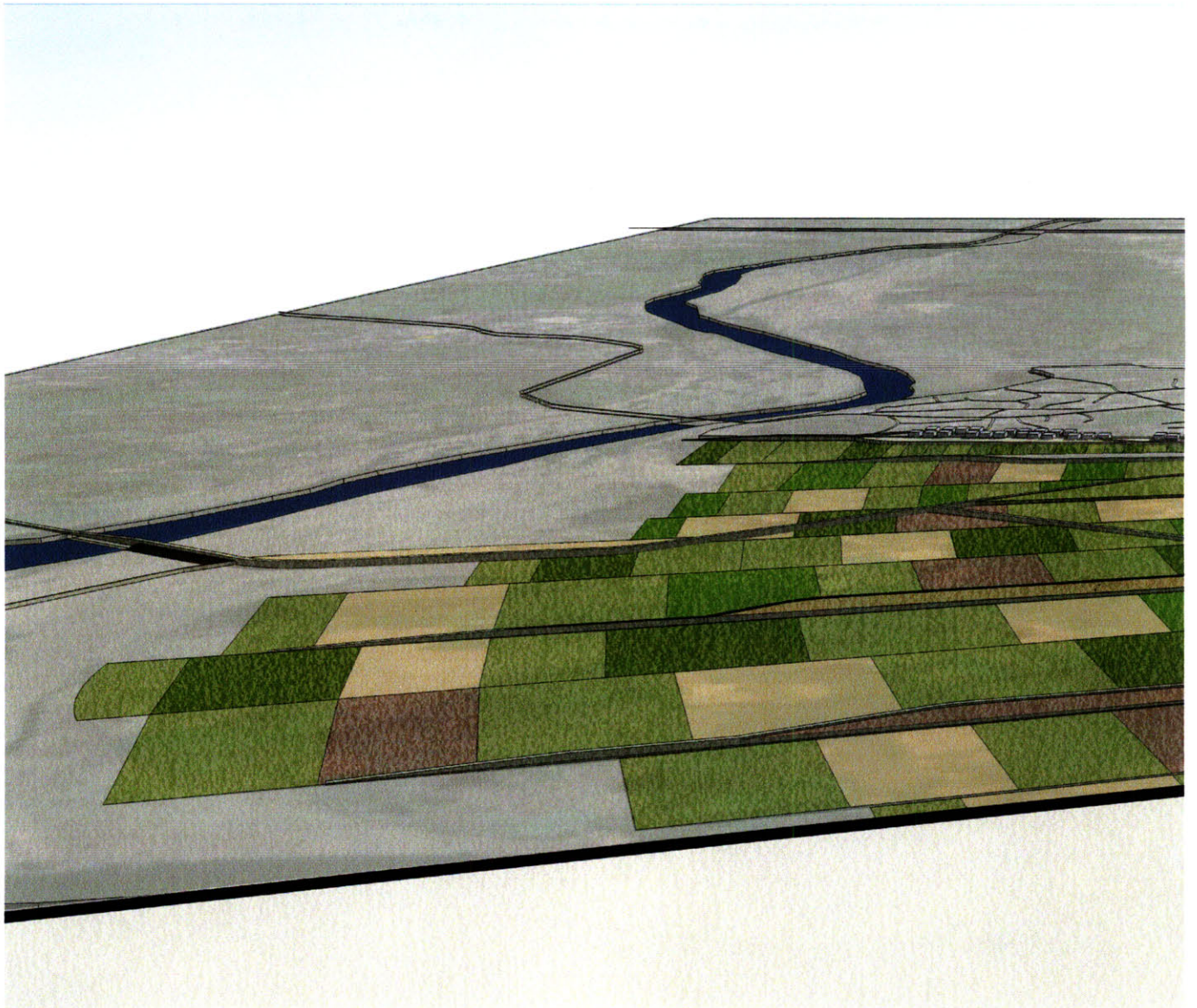
Navsari City

Purna River

Fair/Circus ground

Cricket field

Garden

Ghats

Weekly Farmers markets

Viraval Village

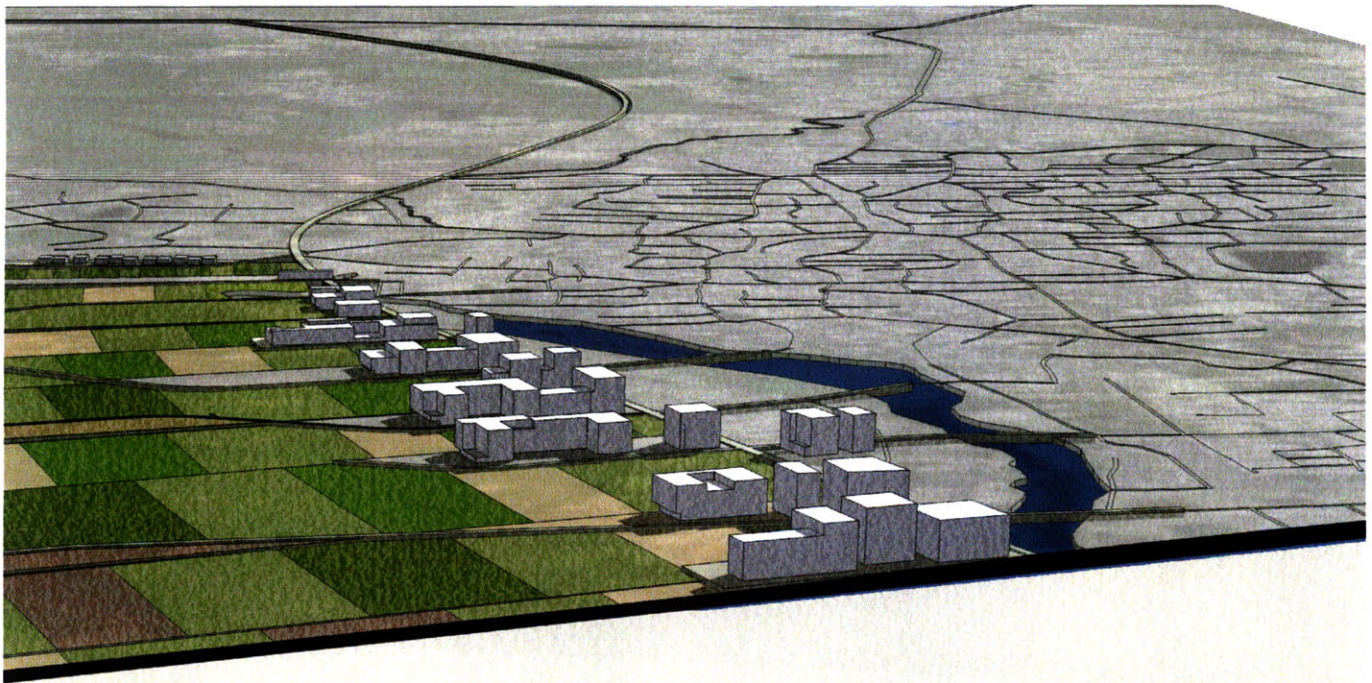Fig.34 Section through the city and the floodplain

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Fig.35 Section through the elevated infrastructure in the floodplain showing
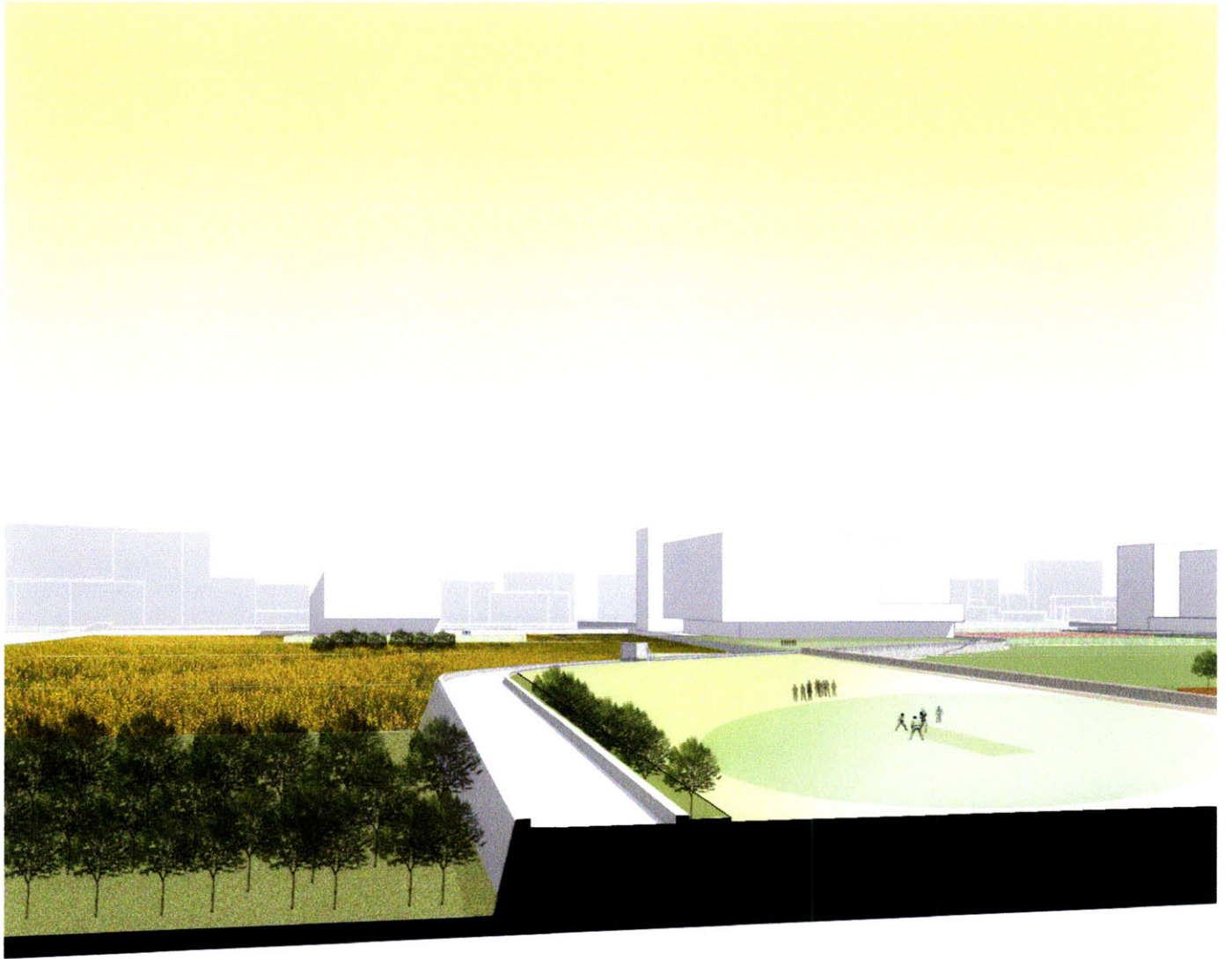the city in the back and temporary occupation of the dykes

Sagarika Suri
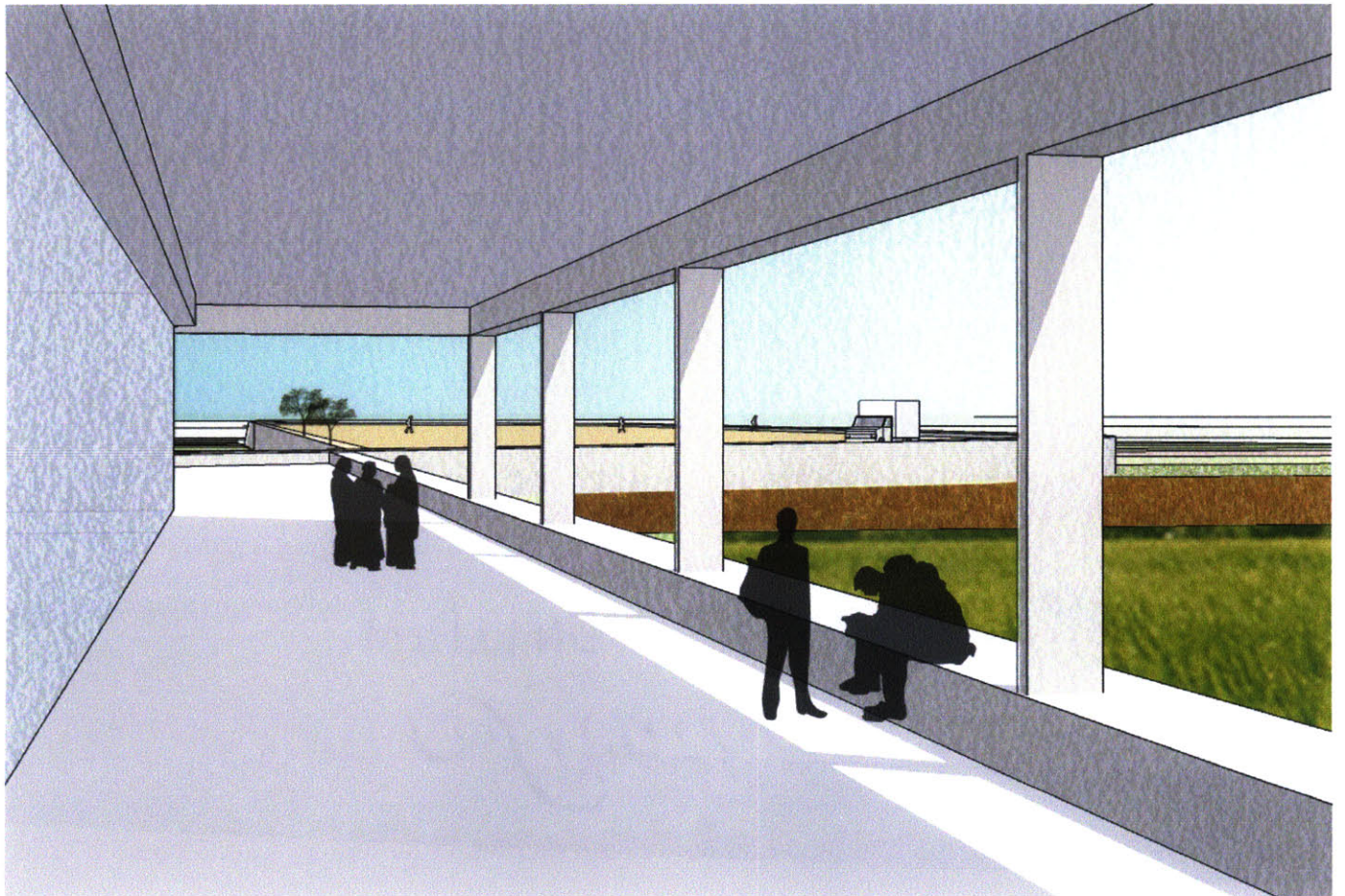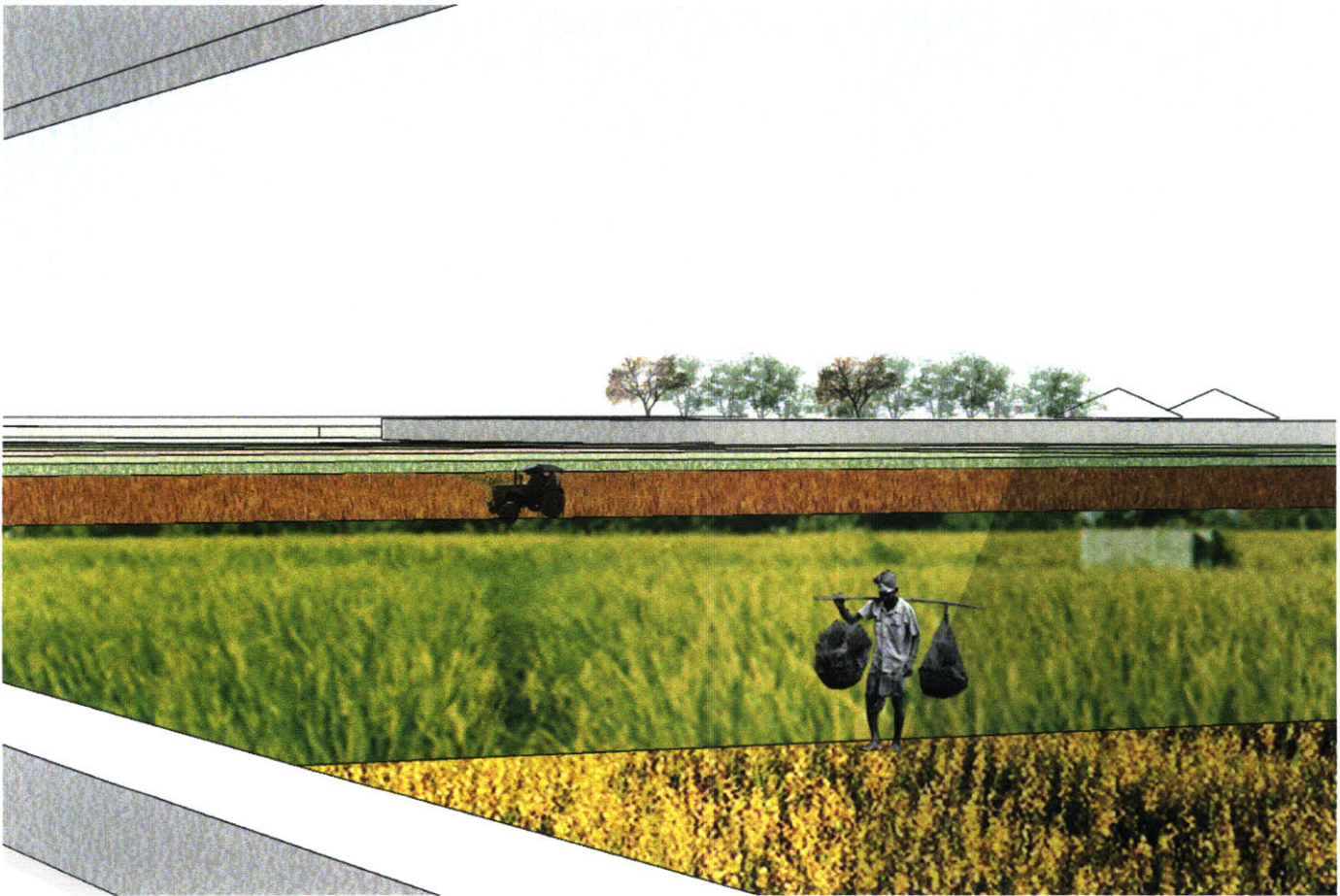
Fig.36 View of the floodplain through the proposed development along the
northern periphery of the city

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Sagarika Suri

DISCUSSION

Small cities pose both problem areas as well as opportunities within the urbanization process in India. As problem areas, they define a very large part of the urban sphere that has remained derelict, mismanaged, not featuring very high on the agenda of policy makers or investors. Most national schemes aimed at their improvement remain tokenistic, falling short even at the primeval level of providing basic amenities. Yet the opportunities are discernable: apart from the traditional arguments regarding their role in promoting balanced development and as crucial linkages between the urban and rural, there are several qualitative and urbanistic advantages associated with small cities. With proximity to infrastructure and the decentralization of decision making, there is finally opportunity to tackle the problem areas while harnessing the potentials.

The question of size that was discussed in chapter one is a recurrent one. What is the ideal size of a city? The answer is elusive as an ideal city size would vary based on personal preference, a regional economic condition or national goals. However it is tempting to imagine what the ideal size of Navsari would be. With 140,000 people, it has the benefits of being comprehensive and familiar. It is a walk able city for the most part, despite the lack of foot paths and traffic signals, larger distances are easily traversed by modest means of public transport and the car is still considered a luxury or an excess. The proximity to the countryside is not just perceived as in the western suburban model, nor is it a cosmetic condition created by a ring of gardens curtailing city growth-agricultural fields of different kinds, from fruit orchards to food grains breach the city's edges, mingling with urban conditions and creating an organic juxtaposition. A transect through the four kilometer breadth of the city leads one from conditions of extreme density, mixed use and chaos to ones of tranquility and lush green fields. The propositions made in this thesis are made possible by the scale and dimensions of the city.

At the same time, a boost in population would provide opportunity for investment, greater attention from the state, which might lead to improvement in urban infrastructure, better institutions and moral upliftment. An ideal size for Navsari would be one that helps the city attain a critical mass, discussed in chapter two- a threshold which would enable the city to maintain its distinct identity as a place of agriculture and urbanity without being subsumed by the larger metropolitan city of Surat, yet as this identity is a function of size, an endlessly growing city would surpass agriculture and small scale industries. The question of size is a delicate one, which would require in depth regional and local analysis pertaining to the city in question.

Conversations with planning authorities in Navsari indicated that they were enthusiastic about the proposed twin-city project, agglomerating Navsari into the metropolitan region of Surat. One reason that they cited was the availability of funding. In assessing the juxtaposition of cities of different sizes with the large scale infrastructure being executed or planned, the region emerges as an important geographical scale, which transcends political and even cultural boundaries, finding coherence in economic or psychological connectivity. It exists within the dual conditions of diversity of lifestyles, economic activities and urban conditions on the one hand and unity brought on by transportation or economic linkages on the other. These conditions enable the region to contend with and neutralize the polarizing effects of the mega cities in mobilizing resources and investment. Within this context the delineation, governance and management of a region becomes important. A regional authority that can generate profit and guide growth while maintaining diversity is imperative for small cities like Navsari which lack the competitive advantage of larger cities. Hence an alternative future for small cities, which does not involve them getting subsumed into a metropolitan agglomeration or growing into urban giants can only be imagined within the auspices of a diverse and well managed region.

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