

Roads to New Urban Futures

Flexible Territorialisation in Peri-urban Kolkata and Hyderabad

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The limited-access road infrastructure that state governments facilitated in peri-urban Kolkata and Hyderabad, post liberalisation, have been examined. These roads reveal the state's flexible territorialisation strategies in peri-urban areas, and highlight state guarantees in land via infrastructure. These projects have been examined as strategies of delineation that deviated from practices of expanding urban limits via extension of jurisdictional boundaries; as state guarantees into peri-urban real estate markets, associated with new governance modalities, predicated on land; and as inter-scalar strategies, which legitimised state governments intervening at the city-level, within a context of competitive dynamics of economic and political regionalism.

Peri-urban areas of metropolitan cities have attracted significant land and real estate interests in the decades following liberalisation. This paper examines high-speed, limited-access road projects promoted by state governments in the geographic peripheries of metropolitan cities, to interrogate not only their role in shaping peri-urban real estate markets, but also to unpack them as territorial strategies of state governments trying to woo external investors in the post-liberalisation milieu.

This paper focuses on the peri-urban road projects promoted in Kolkata and Hyderabad. Both cities, as state capitals, received a significant proportion of “place-making” attention from their respective state governments after liberalisation. These efforts were aimed at creating destinations to attract and anchor domestic and foreign corporates, developers and investors in exclusive townships, special economic zones (SEZs), campuses for information technology (IT), biotechnology, pharmaceutical research and development, finance, specialty healthcare, higher education, etc (Denis 2011; Kennedy and Sood 2016), in peri-urban areas where land was cheaper and easier to alienate (Shaw 2005; DuPont and Sridharan 2007). Within a context of state rescaling, which culminated in state governments materialising post liberalisation economic growth agendas at the city-scale (Kennedy 2014), these “place-making” efforts were more than localised strategies (Shaw and Satish 2007). They ran concurrent to state-level strategies such as accelerated timelines to implement investor- and developer-friendly policies and projects, as well as interstate competitive tactics (Kennedy 2007), often led by chief ministers themselves, and enacted across domestic and international investor meets, marketing roadshows and specially organised homecoming events for the diaspora (Kohli 1989; Naidu and Ninan 2000; Basu 2007; Bose 2007). In both cities, the road projects provided critical support to the state governments' efforts to transform urban peripheries into externally legible destinations and to changing market perceptions about what constituted the cities' “urban” regions.

A closer examination of these road projects offers the opportunity to examine the role of the state in remaking peri-urban areas, with an emphasis on the “optics” of connectivity and external legibility in discursive imaginaries of the urban and urban futures, played out through billboards, project marketing, investor meets, and city-branding exercises (Kennedy 2007; Bhattacharya and Sanyal 2011). Beyond the optics, these projects offer the opportunity to examine how the state's territorial

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strategies engendered real estate markets, leveraged finance for hyper-modern projects in peri-urban/rural locations and facilitated a range of institutional modalities, including public-private partnerships (PPPs). These road projects highlight the fact that the spatial contours and transactional dynamics of peri-urban land transformations have not been natural, incidental or inevitable effects of natural growth and/or “free market” pressures. Rather, these projects reveal the states’ flexible territorialisation strategies at the city-scale, and highlight implicit state guarantees extended to private investment interests in land, via infrastructure, post liberalisation.

Using a comparative, intercity relational frame, the paper undertakes a three-part reading of Kolkata and Hyderabad’s peri-urban road projects: (i) as inter-scalar spatial strategies of the state that privileged “optics” of delineation and legibility, and deviated from practices of expanding urban limits via extension of urban boundaries and jurisdictions; (ii) as state guarantees into peri-urban real estate markets that facilitated new modalities of peri-urban governance, including public-private development partnerships constituted around land management, land delivery and land leveraging; (iii) and as inter-scalar state strategies, which legitimised state governments intervening at the city-level, within a context of competitive dynamics of economic and political regionalism.

The paper begins with a brief contextualisation with reference to conceptual frames used to understand India’s dramatic post-liberalisation peri-urban land transformations. In the second section, the road projects in Kolkata and Hyderabad are situated within the post-liberalisation context of political and economic regionalism. After an introduction to the two road projects, the subsequent sections are organised into a three-part reading of the projects. The paper concludes with reflections on changes in forms and modalities of urbanisation and urban governance that these projects implicate.

The paper represents part of the work undertaken as a part of dissertation research on peri-urban transformations in Kolkata and Hyderabad. Twelve months of fieldwork were undertaken in 2008–09, followed by two months of fieldwork in 2012. Over 80 interviews were conducted with officials in state government departments, city development authorities, developers, real estate consultants, property brokers, representatives of business associations, displaced persons, academics and activists. The research included review of relevant legislations, policy reports, consultant reports, court cases, local archives maintained by displaced persons, and media reports. For this paper, some information has been updated via secondary research.

Theoretical Considerations

The encounters and experiences associated with the rapid influx of urban real estate market dynamics in peri-urban areas of metropolitan cities, post liberalisation, have attracted a lot of contemporary research. On the one hand, these encounters are caught between discursive narratives that reference transnational scales of investor networks and capital accumulation strategies. On the other hand, are messy material realities that comprise the local, often “under the radar” (Vijayabaskar and

Menon 2018), nexus of politicians, brokers, middlemen, touts, and developers that negotiate with landowners, development authorities, parastatals (with eminent domain powers), and new PPPs and special purpose vehicles (SPVs) (with mandates to manage and deliver land). Deregulation, post liberalisation, has made it considerably easier for foreign investors to enter the Indian real estate sector. As such, India has experienced an influx of financial capital from “insurance companies, investment banks, sovereign funds, family offices and other hedge funds” (Rouanet and Halbert 2016). While acknowledging the role of external investors in the liberalised land markets in India, Rouanet and Halbert (2016) warn against assuming a “mechanistic link between investor expectations and the newly-built urban landscapes.” Rather than having a top-down effect on Indian urban real estate, foreign investment interests have been mediated by local developers, embedded in local land and political networks, with capacities to navigate the Indian urban institutional terrain (Searle 2014; Rouanet and Halbert 2016). As such, state governments’ efforts to woo investors have included significant numbers of domestic investors, looking to expand. In this context, the term “external” investor is more useful than the term foreign investor.

Moreover, foreign investors are frequently involved only in the projects’ “last mile,” that is, the construction phase, rather than land aggregation and property title clearance stages, when contextual “risks”—including pushbacks from farmers unwilling to sell, ambiguity of property papers, cost and project overruns due to delays, etc—are higher (Rouanet and Halbert 2016). This has significance for the investment and development profiles in peri-urban areas, as foreign investments predominantly play a role in the built-up phase of projects, which comprise a small proportion of peri-urban real estate markets, otherwise dominated by land transactions. Raman (2016) and Vijayabaskar and Menon (2018) add to this global-local complexity of scale by highlighting the importance of small-scale real estate transactional dynamics in peri-urban transformations. They link their overall argument to the state’s neglect of the agricultural sector, which shapes the underlying structural conditions within which farmers are made to “voluntarily” or “coercively” part with their land, a binary that does not always hold as separate and discrete categories in actual experience.

Another body of research approaches peri-urban transformations not from the perspective of investors and developers, but state-market relationalities. Goldman (2010) and Shatkin (2016) emphasise that the post-liberalisation real estate turn cannot be seen simply as a market phenomenon, but rather, needs to be examined in relation to the state and modalities of urban governance facilitating these dynamics. Goldman uses the term “speculative urbanism,” while Shatkin refers to the “real estate turn in policy and planning,” to highlight that separations between state and market have become porous with regimes of urban development revealing “privatised” objectives and modalities. Levien (2012) and Vijayabaskar and Menon (2018) link the deployment of such new regimes of governance—especially in predominantly rural areas—to dynamics of land grabs and accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003).

In Kennedy (2007) and Kennedy and Sood (2016), the state's contemporary practices to accommodate investors in zones and investment regions—by making available land, infrastructure and simpler regulatory regimes—are discussed with reference to Ong's (2006) conceptual frame of “spaces of exception,” which allow firms and developers to be shielded from local political and economic realities, enable bypass of existing regulations, and facilitate expedited clearances. Levien (2012) argues that use of eminent domain to aggregate land for such zones makes the state a “land broker” to private interests. There have been a few spectacular examples of successful direct mediations by the state to anchor foreign corporate. For instance, Chandrababu Naidu (ex-chief minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh) negotiating with Microsoft to set up its first offshore research and development (R&D) in Gachibowli, located in the periphery of Hyderabad. However, more frequently, direct and absolute territorial claims of the state in the post-liberalisation period have encountered significant pushbacks, as the events in Singur, Nandigram, Maha Mumbai SEZs, Goa SEZs, etc, highlight. This has led to the replacement of the colonial era Land Acquisition Act, 1894, with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act, 2013.

This paper also focuses on the implications of peri-urban road projects as state strategies. The key argument is that the peri-urban road projects in Kolkata and Hyderabad represent substantive, but flexible territorialisation strategies deployed by the state. These strategies are in contrast to the use of eminent domain, designation of “zones of exception” and even explicit expansions of city boundaries as municipal and/or development areas, where expressions of the state's territorial powers are absolute. The road projects represent expensive and substantive infrastructure interventions, and signal clear state intent with regard to transforming the cities' peri-urban areas. They extend a form of state guarantee to real estate interests in these areas. At the same time they are flexible, as they are operationalised through a range of governance and financing modalities, including SPVs and PPPs. The flexibility is also linked to the range of local actors as well as foreign investors looking for “available” and peri-urban land, that these strategies speak to, without directly undertaking land acquisitions and/or zone demarcations (although in both cities, these direct strategies were also deployed). The projects segue well into the state government's discursive practices, that is, marketing and branding of the cities as investment destinations, across billboards, brochures and PowerPoint presentations in investor meets, playing on the optics of connectivity and legibility. The projects also facilitate fragmented and messy material practices across multiple real estate intentionalities and actors, as Raman (2016) and Vijayabaskar and Menon (2018) observe in their work on Chennai's peripheries.

Kolkata and Hyderabad's peripheries are characterised by flagship built-up projects, such as the Hyderabad Information Technology and Engineering Consultancy (HITEC) City in Cyberabad and the IBM building in New Town, Kolkata, located amidst large swathes of undeveloped land. The land is caught

up in volatile and frequently violent real estate dynamics with pushbacks from residents against state-led land acquisitions, and the presence of local developers, politicians, middlemen, touts and residents, and frequent aggregations and transactions (Mitra 2018). These volatile and uneven geographies highlight that peri-urban transformations cannot be examined in terms of only the observable and visible built-forms. Rather, it is important to understand both the representational optics deployed, as well as the emergent “invisible” layers of urban territorialisation, including governance forms and processes, project financing, and reclamations from other resource footprints, particularly “marginal” lands such as marshy lands, rocky outcrops, drainage channels, dry tank beds and other forms of “waste” lands. A territorialisation lens allows complexities of deploying global spatial imaginaries on a terrain comprised of complex and unclear property tenure relationships, tied into complex urban–peri-urban systems of waste, water, food and energy, to be considered (Ghosh and Sen 1987; Bunting et al 2005; Dey 2008).

This paper takes a closer look at the state's territorial strategies, implicated by the peri-urban road projects in Kolkata and Hyderabad, in terms of the spatial guarantees they signal. This paper examines the road projects, both in terms of their discursive deployment in marketing and branding exercises, as well as the on-ground material dynamics of territorialisation that they have facilitated.

Economic and Political Regionalism

The scalar significance of the peri-urban road projects in Kolkata and Hyderabad have to be read within the larger context of political and economic regionalism (Sinha 2004), post liberalisation. Liberalisation in 1991 coincided with an intense period of political volatility and six changes of the national government between 1989 and 1998. The national elections did not deliver a clear majority to any political party and there were frequent makings and unmakings of political coalitions to form the government. Regional political parties, which emerged in response to Congress's hegemonic national and state presence post independence, were key to these political barterers and gained voice at the national scale despite regional constituencies and agendas. Thus, economic regionalism was strongly affected by political regionalism (Corbridge and Harriss 2000). The last three decades are replete with examples of inter-state competition coloured by regionally chauvinistic claims and counterclaims. With liberalisation, state governments assumed more responsibilities for economic growth agendas, including policies to induce private sector investments and gain fiscal autonomy (Kohli 1989; Joshi and Little 1996). Limited internal capacities and compressed timelines facilitated ingress of private sector consultants, especially global firms such as McKinsey and new groups such as the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) (Pedersen 2000) to devise state and city reform agendas. It marked a shift from an era of state-led planning to an era of consultant-led visioning exercises (Reddy 1999; WEBEL nd).

Kolkata and Hyderabad's experiences echo the pressures, and eventually the choices that many lesser-known Indian

cities encountered, wherein state governments devised competitive, often aggressive strategies to remake particular cities into “globally” relevant investment destinations, to be inserted into national and transnational flows of capital (Jessop 2002; Harvey 2006). They also echo the experiences of most state capitals in the country, which became default and priority locations of their respective state governments’ post-liberalisation enthusiasm.

Peri-urban Roads to New Urban Futures

The two road projects used as cases in this paper include the East–West Road Corridor (EWRC) project in New Town–Rajarhat in Kolkata, and the Outer Ring Road (ORR) project in Hyderabad. The EWRC project, a 6.5 kilometre (km) stretch of a 10-lane arterial road—proposed as a high-speed corridor, between Action Area 1D in New Town to Shikarpur Kulti Canal Road—created a critical link between the New Town–Rajarhat urban extensions and the city’s international airport at Dum Dum. The ORR project is on a much grander scale. It is a 159 km long, 8-lane road project, with a design speed of 120 km per hour (kmph), encircling Hyderabad, connecting the new international airport at Shamshabad to SEZs, Cyberabad, the Financial District, and other destinations (HMDA 2016).

The peri-urban context of the EWRC project was New Town, planned over 3,780 hectares (Mitra 2002), and Rajarhat designated across 6,000–7,000 acres of land (WBHDICO 2018). New Town was conceptualised as a self-sufficient mixed-use township, planned around IT and other knowledge economy sectors. These areas were extensions of the IT hub in Sector 5 in Bidhannagar, and located on Kolkata’s eastern periphery (Bunting et al 2005; Bose 2008). Kolkata’s Basic Development Plan designates the city’s eastern periphery as a no-development zone because of its wetland characteristics (Bagchi 1987). To bypass these regulations, New Town was planned and developed by the West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (WBHDICO) (constituted under the Companies Act) and Rajarhat was put under the jurisdiction of the Bhangar–Rajarhat Area Development Authority (BRADA), which was created in 2007 under the housing department (rather than the urban development department, as is the common practice).

The EWRC was under the planning control of the WBHDICO and developed via an external contractor. Originally, it was planned as a 10-lane arterial road, and estimated to cost ₹40.65 crore by the West Bengal housing directorate (estimates were done in December 2004) (CAG 2007). However, the work was taken up on a fast-track basis in March 2005, to facilitate bulk land-buyers in the New Town area, who wanted the road to be developed before finalising their land deals with the government, and the project specifications were changed to that of a 6-lane road. The housing directorate was bypassed, and the contractor Madhumita Construction Limited was given the project, without a tender, for a price of ₹16.6 crore, rather than ₹17.66 crore, as estimated (CAG 2007). The comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) highlights multiple concerns, including cost overruns, project delays, temporary exit of the contractor from the project, non-payment of compensation,

poor quality materials, non-coordination with government bodies in laying infrastructure along the road, selection of contractor without a tender, and bypassing of the housing directorate in decision-making.

The ORR project in Hyderabad also started in 2005. It was proposed by Y S R Reddy (of Congress-I), who took over as chief minister, after Chandrababu Naidu (and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)) was voted out in 2004. It is difficult to find a consistent project valuation of the ORR project, however, a project appraisal report prepared by the Government Performance Group (TGP) at the Indian School of Business (ISB 2010) put estimates above ₹6,000 crore for the first three phases of the project, accounting for approximately 54% of the project. Nallathiga (2014) mentions a cost of approximately ₹7,400 crore. The governance of the ORR (design, bid management, and financial mobilisation) was operationalised via an SPV, constituted by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, called the Hyderabad Growth Corridor Limited (HGCL), under the Companies Act, 1956. Initially, the equity partners included the Infrastructure Corporation of Andhra Pradesh (INCAP) with a 40% stake and the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (HUDA) with a 60% stake. Now INCAP has a 26% share and the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), which subsumed HUDA, holds a 74% stake (HMDA 2016). The construction of the ORR project, divided into two phases, has leveraged a mix of state investments, long-term loans from national banks (with HMDA’s land bank held in mortgage), PPP models with annuity repayment models, funding from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JICA), etc (ISB 2010; Nallathiga 2014). The CAG (2018) report highlights overpayments to concessionaires. The project has faced controversies around land acquisition and frequent (115 instances) alignment changes (Hindu 2006; Nallathiga 2014),² which have made surrounding land markets volatile. The alignment changes drew an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and were scrutinised by a special high court bench, with Chandrababu Naidu levelling charges of corruption against Reddy (TOI 2006). As per the ORR website,

The Outer Ring Road should be viewed as road-cum-area development project ... [it] creates options for development of further satellite townships, provides quick access to the International Airport from strategic parts of the city, connects various new urban nodes outside the city like Hi-Tech city Games village, LILT, ISB, Hardware Park, Singapore Township Financial district etc ... The proposed corridor is designed to be fully access controlled and limited access is to be provided at NH/SHI Major road crossings. (GOAP 2009)

Although the two projects differ significantly in their alignment lengths, technical designs and scales of peri-urban intervention, they are similar in their basic objective of connecting the city’s international airports to new peri-urban locations. Both represent direct involvement of the state governments in peri-urban city-scale strategies.

Spatial Strategies of Delineation

Both road projects have facilitated high-speed entry and exit to peri-urban destinations via the cities’ international airports, bypassing the main cities’ economies and resident populations.³

As marketing of peri-urban destinations continue to occur in investor meets and road shows not only in domestic locations, but also Dubai, Singapore, etc, the “optics” of connectivity that these roads facilitate, continue to be relevant. The success of the roads as territorial delineation strategies, especially for the “external” gaze may also be read into the successful finance leveraging exercise by HGCL, to secure interest in the ORR project from private concessionaires, domestic national banks and from a multilateral funding agency like JICA. In Kolkata, a similar success may be read in relation to the urgency with which the EWRC project was pushed through at the behest of bulk land buyers in New Town, who were eager for the road to be completed before finalising their land deals.

These road projects reveal a new logic of spatially delineating the “urban” that deviates from the state’s traditional relationship to territoriality. State claims to territoriality have commonly been enacted via boundaries and bounded jurisdictions. Master plans and notified “development areas” have been used to expand metropolitan limits (Kumar 2006). Such delineations affirm/reaffirm the regulatory role of the state, reconfigure governance responsibilities and signal the state’s acknowledgement that urbanisation trends have spilled beyond existing boundaries, and there is need for development controls and new urban infrastructures in the expanded areas. However, in both Kolkata and Hyderabad, the road projects were infrastructure interventions that preceded statutory jurisdictional expansions, which eventually rationalised the cities’ expanded urban limits (discussed in more detail in the section on state rescaling). Both roads were key instruments that “unlocked” a mostly rural periphery as urban real estate and delineated new expanded urban regions in terms of market perceptions. Both roads allowed the state to territorialise and spatially reconfigure the peri-urban via new pathways that opened up areas—as if they were otherwise an indistinguishable hinterland/frontier—bypassing their values and legibility as rural economies, shaped by urban–peri-urban exchanges of food, water, waste and energy. Kennedy and Sood (2016) refer to this as a *tabula rasa* imagination. Flyvbjerg et al (2003) highlight that in such deployments, infrastructure is not just a “simple precondition for production and consumption,” but rather, “at the very core of these activities.”

This highlights that in the post-liberalisation milieu state strategies have become increasingly cognisant of investor perceptions and private developers’ expectations from the state, and in time are aligning with “market” practices of colonisation as the way to materialise urban expansion. In both road projects, the explicit optics geared towards an external audience reveal that both state governments believed they were ultimately dependent on investors to deliver on their claims of economic growth.

State Guarantees for Real Estate Markets

Braudel highlights that the state can play the role of a regulator to control the private sector’s appetite for profits (Wallerstein 1991). It can also assume the role of a facilitator and become a guarantor for private interests and profits. He theorises that exceptional private profits are not possible without the state

rescinding its role as regulator and without explicit state guarantees bolstering the private sector. Braudel’s thesis provides a provocation to examine the state’s territorialisation of peri-urban areas via road projects, in terms of their implications on the state’s role as regulator versus a facilitator and guarantor in the post-liberalisation milieu.

First, the state guarantees implicated by these road projects emerged from the substantive state investments, ranging from about ₹40 crore in the EWRC in Kolkata to more than ₹6,000 crores in the ORR in Hyderabad. The state’s commitment to developing the peri-urban areas was further showcased by its willingness to be institutionally flexible by using a private company mode to govern the build phase of these road projects and fast-track their development. Both the WBHIDCO in the case of the EWRC and the HGCL in the case of the ORR project were state agencies, constituted under the Companies Act. Most importantly, the state’s own peri-urban stake was clarified (in the case of the ORR) by the flows of finance that the state leveraged and directed into the road project, including loans from domestic banks and development funding from JICA.

Also significant were the ways in which the state itself leveraged land around these road projects, highlighting the state’s own interest in these areas as land supplier/developer, another signal of state guarantee. The ORR alignment is in effect a “growth corridor,” which encompasses 1 km of land on either side of the road,⁴ covering nearly 1.4 lakh acres (*Deccan Chronicle* 2017). In 2017, the HMDA proposed to expand this “corridor” to 5 km on either side of the ORR, as per the direction of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, and hired two consultants to undertake market research of the real estate potential of the 2,170 sq km area that this would bring in (Shah 2017). In addition the ISB (2010) report highlights that the ORR is associated with real estate developments across 10 intersections, each of which has approximately 250 acres of land available for commercial development, as well as a further 12 locations where the HUDA has land banks. Gupta (2017) states,

ORR development in Hyderabad has transformed old villages into new real estate destinations. Shamirpet, Kokapet, Puppalaguda used to be rural areas, but they are now witnessing rampant construction of residential buildings, projects, and townships due to their proximity to the IT corridor of Hyderabad via the ORR. While Shamirpet has its own biotechnology park coming up, Kokapet and Puppalaguda are receiving housing demand from IT workforce. Apart from this, Gandipet, Kollur, Chandanagar, Adibatlaand Pocharam are other areas that have come up as prominent markets for buying properties.

In New Town–Rajarhat the implementation of the EWRC was fast-tracked by the WBHIDCO, to facilitate bulk land sales (CAG 2007). Moreover, the WBHIDCO held a monopoly on land supply and price in New Town. On the one hand they tried to leverage this monopoly; some researchers characterised the WBHIDCO’s pricing as the steepest markups in Asia (Sengupta and Tiple 2007). On the other hand, the CAG (2007) highlights how the WBHIDCO significantly misused the chairman’s quota to preferentially accommodate preferred corporates (including a deal to provide cheap land to Tata as a further sweetener to the Singur project) at minimal prices in New Town. If land supply and price were used to signal the state government’s commitment

to place in New Town, in the 7,000 hectare Rajarhat area, this commitment was expressed by allowing private developers a free-for-all to aggregate land directly from farmers, under the jurisdiction of the newly constituted BRADA. Moreover, the BRADA did not set in place any regulations for the private sector's land aggregations. Rajarhat's "laissez-faire" land market encouraged widespread violence and coercions, especially as land prices increased significantly. Mamata Banerjee dismantled the BRADA in 2011, soon after the Trinamool Congress won the state elections and she became the chief minister. As Dey et al (2013: 211) note, the effects of dismantling the BRADA were immediate on land prices: "land off the main road which used to cost ₹7 lakh a cottah has come down to ₹2.25 lakh a cottah overnight. Even in the remoter areas under BRADA the price of land was anything between ₹1 lakh and ₹5.5 lakh till yesterday." These price drops highlight the critical role of state guarantees in bolstering peri-urban real estate markets.

Field research revealed that urban real estate dynamics in the peripheries attracted city brokers and "fixers," and created a new generation of agents and aggregators from amongst the original residents, in both cities. Also, local actors were tied to local political parties and politicians, and there were multiple stories of personal fortunes that were made and lost, in frequent cycles of land transactions, aggregations and land price volatilities. Displaced households highlighted how land loss affected the ways in which they had used land as a financial social security net to navigate the times when agricultural yields were low. In both cities, the relatively well-off landowners who received compensation highlighted that the money had eventually run out and they were left with few options afterwards. These land markets irretrievably altered the land-use and land-value regimes associated with these peri-urban locations even when they did not translate eventually to built-up developments. In Kolkata, the expansion of New Town and Rajarhat displaced farming and fishing activities and affected the waste treatment capacities of the location's geohydrological formations. In Hyderabad, the ORR created financial incentives that led to rapid abandonment of arid agricultural practices and associated groundwater recharge practices (Van Rooijen et al 2011). This exacerbated the drought-like conditions in Hyderabad.

State Rescaling and Modalities of Governance

The changing relationalities of the state to territoriality and new state priorities embedded in these relationalities, played out in terms of new authorities and multiple transitions in jurisdictions in the peri-urban areas of both cities as well as in the two peri-urban road projects.

The creation of new authorities served many purposes. In its simplest form, it allowed project implementation to be fast-tracked, as exemplified by the SPV, HGCL, created for the ORR in Hyderabad, and the private company status of HIDCO in Kolkata which oversaw the implementation of the EWRC. More complex motivations included accommodating preferred private partners, as was the case when the GMR Group—which is developing the Hyderabad International Airport—was given 5,495 acres as a land bank to be developed for real estate purposes. The GMR Group

developed 1,500 acres of this land as an Airport City, which accommodates two SEZs of 250 acres each. The remaining 1,000 acres are to be developed as per "themes" or sectors, including a "healthport" and "eduport," etc (GMR 2016). In many cases, the new authorities allowed new master plans and new development areas to be designated. For example, the Cyberabad Development Authority (CDA) created a master plan for Cyberabad, the BRADA facilitated laissez-faire land aggregation in Rajarhat, and the HIDCO prepared and implemented its own master plan for New Town that allowed the urbanisation of the city's eastern periphery, which had been deliberately left out of the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority's (KMDA) Basic Development Plan (Bagchi 1987). However across the multiple authorities, jurisdictions and instrumentalities that the peri-urban areas of Kolkata and Hyderabad experienced, some common thematics emerge, namely the flexible territorialisation of the peri-urban, and the fragmented spatiality of multiple jurisdictions. While such "jurisdictional creep" strikes a discordant note in relation to traditional expectations of coherent metropolitan boundary expansions and planning concepts such as metropolitan regions, such incrementalism dovetails well with market-led land colonisation patterns and speaks to Braudel's thesis regarding the state assuming regulatory versus facilitatory roles.

Over time, the spatially fragmented jurisdictions of new peri-urban authorities in both cities were consolidated and/or rationalised. In peri-urban Hyderabad, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) was created in April 2007, based on a government order issued in 2005, which proposed to consolidate the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad (MCH) area with the areas of 12 surrounding municipalities and eight gram panchayats. The consolidation was made possible by a high court judgment in 2007, although the consolidation was opposed across party lines (Kennedy 2014; Sood 2016). The HMDA was constituted in 2008 by consolidating the areas under multiple authorities, including the HUDA, CDA and the Hyderabad Airport Development Authority (HADA). In Kolkata, the New Town area has also seen governance transitions from the WBHIDCO (constituted under the Companies Act) initially designated as the planning and development authority. In 2007, the New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA)—constituted under the New Town Kolkata Development Authority Act, 2007—took over from the WBHIDCO. In Rajarhat, the BRADA was created in 2007 under the housing department. After it was dismantled in 2011, the land was transferred to the jurisdiction of the WBHIDCO. In 2012, the WBHIDCO created a Land Use and Development Control Plan (LUDCP) for the area previously under the BRADA (WBHIDCO 2012). In 2015, an expanded municipal body called the Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation was constituted for Salt Lake city, as well as areas previously under the BRADA (My Estate Point 2015). The multiple cycles of jurisdictional changes are now invisible, as are the conflicts between different state bodies that were functional in these areas. The current consolidated jurisdictions fit with planning conceptions of a metropolitan region. However, the history of institutional conflict, negotiations, frequent changes

in jurisdictions and use of institutional modalities for varying objectives—from project management, land acquisition, land price setting, and regulation, to effecting statutory bypass of existing regulations—highlight how flexible the state's territorial strategies have been in these peri-urban areas. The institutional histories that played out in the peripheries of the two cities are critical for understanding the politics and the increasing flexibility of state territoriality, which was facilitated by the territorial delineation that the new roads allowed in the peri-urban expansions of both cities.

The thesis regarding state rescaling highlights the essentially politicised processes (often in response to new economic and political imperatives) through which the state reorganises its systems of power and authority across scales of governance (Brenner 2004). This often involves introducing new authorities, removing others, reviving yet others, and sometimes restructuring the scale and jurisdictional powers of particular authorities. The multiple jurisdictions deployed in both cities, some with new structures and some with new roles (such as the housing department rather than the urban development department overseeing New Town's development), highlight the significant ways in which the state governments reinserted themselves into city-scale strategies, over and beyond existing authorities, including parastatals. Citing examples from Bengaluru and Pune, Balakrishnan (2013) terms the emergence of institutional forms beyond parastatals as forms of "negotiated decentralisation." Rescaling in the Indian context has been analysed in terms of the state governments increasingly leveraging land, a state subject in the Constitution, as they engage in strategies of capital accumulation (Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan 2011; Kennedy 2014). There is also clear acknowledgement that rescaling has not trickled down to the municipal level, which continue primarily as providers of basic services (Kennedy and Sood 2016), even as cities are inserted into discourses and practices of being "growth engines."

I argue that the Indian dynamics of state rescaling have also been intensely political, and associated with significant flexibility of territorial strategies and institutional modalities. For one, regional political parties and regional agendas have played a significant role in shaping rescaling dynamics. This can be observed in West Bengal and undivided Andhra Pradesh. Both state governments faced legacy economic and political challenges, post liberalisation. West Bengal under the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI[M]) was seen as the hub of union politics and general unfriendliness towards private capital (Pedersen 2001; Banerjee et al 2002). Undivided Andhra Pradesh under the TDP and then Congress-I had to consolidate its regional Telugu constituency, including its caste dimensions, and its proud links to irrigation-fed agriculture on the one hand, and the global IT industry on the other (Kohli 1988; Rao and Ram 1994; Srinivasulu and Sarangi 1999), even as it tried to become "globally" relevant. In both states, the state capitals were critical sites to reconcile state-level legacy issues (Basu 2007). The road projects, in particular, played a critical role in these inter-scalar and state rescaling dynamics. Hyderabad's peri-urban land market anchored and accommodated the demand

for urban real estate that emerged from agricultural surpluses for people from coastal Andhra, who did not have a landed interest in Hyderabad for historical reasons (Upadhyaya 1988; Luther 2006). As such, Hyderabad's peri-urban market was active since the 1980s. However, these real estate market dynamics saw a dramatic expansion post liberalisation in the late 1990's in areas such as Madhapur and Gachibowli. The ORR consolidated these dynamics via new IT campuses, educational campuses and the financial districts in these locations. In West Bengal the CPI(M) tried to change investor perceptions by promoting 13 new PPPs between leading local developers such as the Ambuja Group, Shrachi Group, etc, and the state government (Sengupta 2006, 2007). These new entities were involved with housing projects in Kolkata and these developers became de facto advisors to the state government and played an active role in the Rajarhat New Town areas, particularly in land aggregations in Rajarhat.

Conclusions

This paper privileges a particular empirical and analytic entry point of peri-urban road projects into the phenomenon of peri-urban transformations of metropolitan cities in India, post liberalisation, a phenomenon that has otherwise attracted substantial research. The decision to enter via the road projects is a conscious attempt to make explicit the mode of territorialisation that has been associated with the state's interventions in peri-urban areas. Notions of connectivity and legibility are, by now, familiar discourses. On the one hand, the definitional ambit of these notions is expanding. The material connectivity promised by road projects are expanding into "infrastructure corridors" that promise pathways to facilitate digital, infrastructural, material and investment flows. On the other hand, these notions are also being depoliticised, accepted and eventually normalised. For example, enhancing the digital footprint of our cities, that otherwise lack infrastructure and are held together by complex and fragmented systems of governance and legality (Kennedy and Sood 2016), is now accepted as a key component of national urban missions such as "Smart Cities." It may therefore be imperative to move beyond an analysis of the discourses themselves and unpack the material modalities of urban territorialisation, the nature of emergent urbanisation and changes in governance they are facilitating.

The experiences with the peri-urban road projects in both Kolkata and Hyderabad highlight that the state's focus on encouraging developers and investors (as well as brokers, touts and middlemen) rather than regulating them has led to it taking on a strong role of providing guarantees to mitigate the market's perceptions of risks. However, these guarantees have been subject to political cycles, and have implicated the state's power to provide a balance to an unregulated regime of coercions, violence and volatility around land transfers. Ultimately, this not only makes emerging urbanisation and its associated economies more directly vulnerable to shifts in investor perceptions, and to the ebb and flow of investments, but has also facilitated a structurally violent process of dispossession as productive rural economies transition into undeveloped real estate.

The fragmented and incremental spatiality of multiple jurisdictional boundaries associated with corridor-led urban growth highlight urbanisation patterns where traditional core-periphery spatialities are disrupted. With in-place urbanisation encouraged by roads and corridors, the question is not just limited to the challenges of rural populations moving to urban areas, but also of urban dynamics moving to rural areas. Ultimately, this means there may be a need to rethink the definition of the “urban” itself. Apart from the theoretical work that such patterns of urbanisation demand, there are implications for urban infrastructure delivery, economic transitions, and spatialities of urban governance.

Both peri-urban road projects discussed in this paper have been followed by larger and even more ambitious plans and corridor projects. In Hyderabad, now situated in Telangana, a new proposal floated in 2014 by the state government proposed the development of 13 mini cities (or investment regions) along the ORR (*Deccan Chronicle* 2014). Even more ambitiously in 2017 a new 340 km Regional Ring Road (the ORR is 159 km) was announced, also encircling Hyderabad and located even further out than the ORR, to connect key locations in surrounding districts and national highways (*Eenadu* 2017). In Kolkata, the objective of connecting the city’s eastern periphery has gone beyond the EWRC. The ambitious East–West Metro Corridor,

planned over two phases, and sponsored by JICA, has become the new eastern corridor.

The questions and provocations in this paper find wider relevance with the proliferation of pan-regional infrastructure corridors across the country, which implicate significant changes for the country’s economic geography. For example, Sampat (2016) raises concerns about “rentier” economies emerging along the Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC); Dholaria, in particular. The footloose nature of investments is a genuine concern. However, in the Indian context these aspirational investments have often not materialised. Rather, there has been a proliferation of multi-scalar politicised real estate nexuses. There is an even more fundamental concern about state–market relationality here. What do these corridors signal about the extent to which the state is willing to retreat from regulatory imperatives and jurisdictional boundaries via flexible territorialisation? In effect, these corridors could be institutionally designed to act as “pipelines” that allow the state to funnel access to land, labour, credit, approvals, infrastructure, and exemptions across and beyond direct deployment of eminent domain and beyond existing scales of governance and jurisdictional boundaries. The economic geography likely to emerge from these dynamics and mitigating responses, if any, remain to be seen.

NOTES

- 1 Eminent domain refers to the powers of the state to acquire land for “public purpose” using the statutory provisions of certain acts, such as the “The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.” This power may be wielded only by certain government bodies that are identified in the relevant acts. For a detailed analysis of the history, practice and limitations of eminent domain in India, see Sampat (2013).
- 2 Ramachandraiah (2009) is a useful parallel reference here, since it highlights how the alignment of the Hyderabad Metro Project given to Maytas for infrastructure development, was closely tied to the real estate interests of the company.
- 3 For example, both roads lacked public transportation systems, in initial years. For many years a system of private chartered buses and minivans plied on the ORR to ferry people from the city to the new peri-urban employment hubs.
- 4 A list of the relevant government orders are available at <http://www.hmda.gov.in/Downloads/townplanning/orrcc%20layout%20instructions.pdf>.

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