

Metropolitan scale-building and consequences for local government and governance in contemporary India. Examining the politics of making Greater Hyderabad

Lorraine Kennedy, CNRS-CEIAS, EHESS, Paris

Abstract. This paper analyses the politics—both in terms of local state sovereignty and urban citizenship—of strategies that aim to build metropolitan scale in India's largest urban agglomerations. Led by state governments, efforts to build scale are usually framed within the broader objective of enhancing growth and economic development, and are generally pursued in conjunction with sector-specific policies that seek to restructure urban economies. In the perspective developed here, metropolitan rescaling processes involve spatial, economy and political aspects. The specific focus is on the repercussions for municipal government of scale-building strategies deployed by other state scales.

One manifestation of state spatial rescaling (Brenner et al 2003; 2004) is the spatial expansion of built-up areas to peri-urban and rural hinterlands, a pattern observed in most of India's in metropolitan cities, and which is pursued in some cases in conjunction with policies to restructure urban economies. Recent studies have sought to explicate the drivers and specific modalities of such strategies, from the perspective of various spatial scales, from global finance capital (Denis 2011; Halbert, Rouanet 2015) and state-level political elites (Kennedy 2007, 2009, 2014; Kennedy, Sood 2016) to local property developers (Raman 2016; Rouanet, Halbert 2016). As has been richly documented, various actors are seizing opportunities for rents from land conversion and property development, in response to market demand and with a view to speculating on the future appreciation of urban property values, driving a form of accumulation that often comes at the cost of dispossession of land, eviction from informal settlements and loss of livelihood for local people (Levien 2013; Sampat 2016), although situations vary remarkably depending on the political economic dynamics of each locality. Less stringent enforcement of plans by rural panchayats and more lenient regulations also make peri-urban spaces attractive places to invest (Roy 2011; Zerah, Denis forthcoming). Of special interest here are processes of corporate urbanization, notably township development and the private provision of public goods (Sood 2015), which contribute to producing unplanned development

Of particular relevance for the research questions here, some state governments have taken steps to expand the formal municipal boundaries of their largest cities, e.g., Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, citing the need to regularise urbanising spaces and standardise urban service levels. These efforts to formally reorganize territory express a form of political will to accompany metropolitan restructuring and initiate new areas of growth, notably through large-scale transport projects (ring roads, mass transit, etc) and the development of industrial estates, often in partnership with private developers.

In this context and drawing on the case of Greater Hyderabad, formed in 2007, this paper focuses on the issues and challenges political rescaling raises for municipal government, with regard to basic service delivery as well as political participation. In particular, I am interested in tension between the state government and the municipality over new industrial areas in the peripheral areas, which are effectively

governed through special regulatory frameworks, becoming 'deemed local bodies', which are authorized to collect and spend property tax. Such exceptions raise questions of local state sovereignty, fiscal responsibility and citizenship, in terms of political representation and the redistribution of the gains of growth in Telengana's regional political economy. The analysis, based on empirical, fieldwork-base research conducted in Hyderabad in 2016, will attempt to answer several specific questions including: How successful is the municipality at enhancing service levels in recently annexed localities? What are the particular challenges encountered in rolling out the governance framework of the Community Participation Law, notably the Ward Committees and Area Sabhas, beyond the boundaries of the erstwhile MCH (Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad)?