

## **Do Rural Migrants Divide Ethnically in the City? Ethnographic and Experimental Evidence from India by Tariq Tatchil**

### ABSTRACT:

Despite rapid urbanization across the global south, identity politics within rural-urban migrant communities remains understudied. Past scholarship is divided over whether village-based ethnic divisions will erode or deepen within diverse poor migrant populations. I assess these divergent predictions through ethnography and survey experiments (N=4218) among unique samples of poor migrants in India. Contra conventional expectations, I find intra-class ethnic divisions are neither uniformly transcended nor entrenched across key arenas of migrant life. Instead, I observe variation consistent with situational theories predicting ethnic divisions will be muted only in contexts triggering a common identity among migrants. I pinpoint urban employers and politicians as these triggers. Poor migrants ignore ethnic divisions when facing these elites, who perceive and treat them in class terms. However, migrants remain divided in direct interactions with each other. These bifurcated findings imply poor migrants may be available for both class-based *and* ethnic mobilization in the city.