

Towards a Resilient City for the Post Covid Era --- Addressing the issue of Migration in the New Normal

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Rural Urban Migration is one of oldest activities in human history. All migrants typically relocate anticipating a better life. Sadly, cities across the globe rarely offer dignified shelter to rural migrants - condemning them to live in unhygienic conditions whose detrimental effects got amplified due to Covid. Therefore, focusing on the issue of rural-urban migration. The paper attempts to outline ways for a symbiotic co-existence of rural migrants in the post Covid era city.

Statistics in emergent economies like India exhibiting a rural majority nation—calls for empowerment of rural areas. However even with the noblest of intentions it is rarely successful as Microenterprises struggle to break even due to economy of scale issues. Understandably this encourages villagers to migrate to cities. Sadly, lack of decent legal housing in the city often forces migrants to encroach in the fringe areas in decrepit housing. Unhygienic living conditions promotes epidemics exacerbated in case of Covid as prevention by social distancing was impossible to practice. As disease and lack of income created a reverse exodus into villages, many ranted on dissolution of cities in favour rural living. However, cities being engines of the economy generate maximum employment validating the classical Push Pull factor. **Thus taking rural-urban migration as inevitable the paper would attempt to inquire into ways a new city form can address the issue of migrants and provide them with a dignified living for a sustainable future. Envisioning a holistic approach, it will outline settlement planning as well as new livelihood generation esp. using their inherent understanding of nature. Pandemics are not new to history, and like every time, cities bounced back with greater resilience.**

Therefore the aim is to use this as an opportunity to implement fresh Ideas in order to *Build Back Better* for a Post Covid Era City.

INTRODUCTION:

According to The U.N. the world is presently 55% urban and cities are expected to hold most of the projected increase in humanity for the next 25 years. In the Asian context Relative to population, cities generate higher-than-average proportions of each country's output of goods and services; the Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimates that some 80 percent of new growth in the region has been generated in its urban economies--megacities, massive urban centers each home to 10 million or more people.(Habitat 2008).Therefore, it is logical that economic opportunities of the city attract migrants of all categories ranging from the super-specialist professional to the modest rural migrants looking for unskilled jobs.

Urban economic activities make sizable contributions to the Nation's development esp. in emergent economies (up to 55 percent of gross national product in low-income countries, 73 percent in middle-income countries) In the developed world the share can be as high as 85%. While this unquestionably seems promising in terms of poverty alleviation; it is disturbing to observe the parallel increase in global poverty alongside rapid urbanization. Nowhere is this urban inequality becoming more widespread, than in the most rapidly growing /urbanizing cities in lower income nations of the Global south. (Ruble, 2012). However, the strong correlation of urbanization with wealth of nations is a fact with well documented evidence. In this scenario poverty alleviation is an impending issue to be addressed esp. in emergent economies. Since rural economies rarely offer prosperity and growth vs their urban counterparts, migration from rural areas seem inevitable. The Covid-19 pandemic brought to focus the inhumane neglect of migrants in abominable proportions. Long overlooked, confronting the issue of rural migrants' welfare is imminent for a sustainable city development. Therefore, addressing the issue with due importance appropriate city forms are crucial for a sustainable future robust enough to address contemporary issues and technical challenges.

The SCOPE and Limitations of the paper

Migration contrary to popular opinions is not a contemporary issue is an activity since prehistorical times. As a phenomenon it is not limited to the poverty stricken or between rural and urban but observed even in high skilled professionals. Although divergent in status, both the hi-end specialized professional

and the unskilled seasonal rural migrant share a fundamental thing in common--- both aspire for improving their lives. Interestingly both following migration, are confronted with varying degrees of adjustment and acclimatization. But barring such very broad similarities among these very wide-ranging factors; the rest is diametrically opposite.

While the high end workers are often ones who are highly paid –many often join with bonuses or receive relocation support; such ‘Perks’ are rare and unimaginable in the other end of the spectrum. Shifting to a new context both might face some initial teething problems, the issue is much more severe in the case of the semi-skilled or unskilled rural migrant worker who receives no formal support from his employer. The rural worker migrates to the city leaving behind his family with great dreams for self and larger family at home. Unfortunately, they are often confronted with a rather harsh world at best assuaged by his own network (if any) of previous acquaintances. Most first generation migrants are likely to be young men who have been encouraged to migrate to the city by close friends and family. They face enormous challenges such as a shortage of information, basic knowledge, and negotiating power, which leads to an exploitative system of informal contracts characterised by low wages, unsanitary working conditions, differential pay for men and women, and a lack of social security. Often desperate for employment they are routinely exploited as contractual or in seasonal employment which makes their employers absolve themselves of all responsibilities towards welfare. For e.g. the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 was enacted to govern the conditions of service of inter-state workers in Indian labour law, it is the least enforced of all the laws. The aspect of contractor and job registration under the Act poses a significant challenge in ensuring proper compliance. To be eligible for the Act's rules, an establishment must have at least 5 employees. As a result, domestic workers from other states who serve in private homes are not covered by the provisions of this act.

Thus, except for some emotional support from his peers the migrant often faces a harsh unkind world of unhygienic living with low or even intermittent income. While it may be argued that economic conditions may have been worse in his village it does not legitimize exploitation in the city. Basic necessities of a dignified life like access to basic sanitation and safe drinking water not to mention the unhygienic living accommodation are often denied to the migrants. To sum up it is clearly evident that the unskilled labour class from rural areas leading miserable lives are in imminent need for a serious intervention.

While the problems have been identified long back, not much has been carried out to reform it. The pandemic last year exposed the glaring nonchalance of educated society at large with regard to the appalling plight of these poor migrants. The migrants many of whom were seasonal typically had no legal tenure or rights to their place of work, no official address which effectively denied them access to any government support. Ironically the exploitation apart from being fully visible was under full legal purview as most of these workers being employed on contract (often at rates far low than minimum standards) were categorized as “temporary” hence the employer irrespective of social and financial status could absolve of any responsibilities for welfare to maximizing profit. The paper will focus almost exclusively focus on the plight of these rural semiskilled and unskilled workers and provide directions if not solutions for their improvement. Although improving the life of Migrants has many parameters of development like education healthcare and other social issues like gender the research will limit to concerns of physical development at macroscales. The focus is in proving dignified living by way of shelter at the level off settlement planning. Therefore, other impending development issues which deserve in depth discussion on their own right; are recognized as important but not focused.

The Issue:

Migration esp. from rural to urban areas is typically undertaken to fulfill aspirations of a better life and prosperity in the city. Lacking any specialized skills for the city the construction industry becomes one of the major industry for absorbing these workers. While they often work to build state of the art buildings for a globally exposed clientele, their own living conditions are a shocking contrast. It is actually an unfortunate paradox that the construction industry workers many of whom are migrants rarely get to stay in dignified conditions. Bereft of authorized rights to land they typically occupy land illegally. Draconian top down laws and regulations often lead to unsustainable development. The paucity of effective Implementation exacerbates things further. Taking advantage of the loose control mechanisms unchecked territorial expansion of city in the fringe areas both natural and agricultural land are common. Fringe outlying areas of the city areas thus become popular locations due to their lax implementation and monitoring. occupying these areas, the migrants having no legal rights often build decrepit structures often salvaging waste. Having no official rights to the land access to drainage and sanitation makes settlements vulnerable to natural calamities with the inhabitants predisposed to health issues and even epidemics.

Therefore the encroached settlements typically

- 1) Upset the delicate ecological balance
- 2) Destroy the system which makes them further susceptible to environmental hazards.

Most Large cities have a sizeable floating population comprising of seasonal migrants which does not officially count in census documentations but the city no doubts procures their services and they occupy the city for extended periods of time and subsequently permanently too. During their period of residence they avail of municipal infrastructure which rarely takes into account their usage hence remains strained. Undoubtedly as residents and their contribution to the city it is their fundamental right to avail such facilities. In spite of their role in city building the contribution of this 'Floating' population is seldom acknowledged.

Migrants and COVID Pandemic – an eye opener to a crisis

The Covid Lockdown brought to light the issue of migrants exposing the inadequacies and lacunae of existing policies--- ironically framed with the original intention of protecting migrants. Perhaps for the first time, it revealed the full extent of labour migration ranging from the seasonal, long-term and even circular labourers. BY drawing a sharp focus to the hazardous condition of migrants; the COVID19 pandemic has effectively drawn attention to the imminent need for carrying out reforms of existing policies for the welfare of the migrants.

While cities definitely benefit from migrants (often unethically as a source of exploitative cheap labor) rarely anything is demonstrated by way of reciprocation. The impact of the Covid Lockdown was felt acutely by migrants of all categories drawing attention the issue due its severity. As the cities went for a lockdown many of these migrants who often worked as daily laborers saw their income vanish overnight. Under the jurisdiction of contractual employees often employed via middlemen, the employers (often construction companies) would willfully absolve themselves of any legal or financial responsibilities to the welfare of their migrant workers. Shorn of their livelihood they were left without any resources or basic subsistence; they decided to return to their native villages for survival. While many had travelled thousands of kilometres from their villages government made little efforts to relocate them. Government intervention came very late (ironically after free Vande Bharat repatriation flights from abroad) during which a lot of casualties had already taken place. Frustrated by Government Apathy many

out sheer desperation chose to walk to their native places. Following catastrophic incidents with many migrants collapsing out of exhaustion the government finally mobilized the railways to help in their repatriation.

While migrants can be international (e.g. Indian workers in Middle East or SE Asia) however according to the world bank (COVID-19 CRISIS-THROUGH A MIGRATION LENS: Migration and Development Brief 32, 2020) For many rural poor especially from under-developed rural areas, migration to urban economic centers provides a window of opportunity to escape poverty and unemployment. Remittances from these migrants serve as a lifeline and insurance for families left behind. The COVID-19 outbreak has left many migrant workers lives in jeopardy due to their losing (mostly informal) jobs. A harsh reality for most migrant workers; the matter is exacerbated due to them having no legal rights or position in their places of residence. Thus as the lockdown measures unfurled to contain the pandemic, many found themselves jobless overnight. Having no official rights to tenure most especially those working in the informal sector are condemned to living in overcrowded slums where preventive measures like social distancing are elusive dreams. As borders were sealed off and transport services suspended it rendered many not only jobless but highly predisposed to the disease due to living in insanitary conditions. Understandably out of desperation many even with families attempted to “walk” to their native villages which could be thousands of kilometers away. Although a few NGOs and self-help/charitable groups tried to help by offering food and shelter on the way many succumbed to the arduous journey prompting the government after much criticism by public to reopen some rail routes to carry migrants back to their places of origin.

MIGRANTS AND CITY ---NOT A PARASITIC BUT SYMBIOTIC

Most narratives on Migrants eccentrically focus on how cities provide opportunities to rural migrants --- the observation done casually is alarmingly partisan. While it is an established fact that rural folks migrate into the city for better prospects--- the city also benefits from their contributions. Rural Migrants typically form the major labour pool of the city esp. for support services /unskilled labour partaking a share of 3.3 percent globally (Global Construction 2020, 2013). One of the most diverse sectors is construction Industry--with a sizeable small scale construction activity in the unorganized sector with larger scale construction activity carried out by firms in both the private and public sector. This diverse

range makes the construction Industry employ maximum migrants as per recent statistical data.. (Sutradhar, 2016) . As the first time migrants mostly young men settle they tend to invite their peers and subsequently bring in their families. the largest employer. Along with the men in construction industry Many women are also employed in small-scale industries. It is common for the women to often work as domestic help as well as support staff in healthcare facilities. Thus While sadly only associated with squalor and poverty migrants actually area major support and sustenance for our cities.

Although not of the highest quality Datafrom the migration survey undertaken by NSSO in 2007/08, points to some broad patterns of migration especially of short-duration.According to the survey, more than two-thirds of short-duration migration involves migration tourban areas, with 45.1 percent of them migrating to other states, of which 8.6 percentis to rural areas and 36.5 percent to urban areas in destination states (Srivastava,2011a). The construction industry witnessing rapid growths in employment in the recent yearscontinues to be one of the most leading sectors employing migrant labour. The highest percentage of short duration migrants work in the construction sector (36.2%), followed by theagriculture-related sector (20.4%), and manufacturing (15.9%) (Srivastava 2011a).

Therefore, while It is typically believed that Migrants are like parasites feeding on the resources of the city swelling its population. However, in reality while the migrants move from rural areas (often alone leaving behind their families) to make it good in the city; –the city also benefits from their contribution.

Migrants typically contribute by ways of:

1)*Flexible Workers*

Being flexible workers they can actually bolster the economy. In many construction sites they actually prefer migrants over local workers over this. While this seems optimistic the employers rarely look after their welfare of their workers thanks to legal loopholes which conveniently absolve them any responsibilities.

2)*MSME Industries*

MSME Industries are often labour intensive and requires unskilled/semi- skilled Labour(trainingmaybe imparted for mutual benefits) to service their factories. Willingness of Migrant labour to work flexible

hours often in lieu of annual or seasonal leaves) can be reciprocally advantageous. (Placeholder1, Jacobs 1985)

3) Cooperative light industries often employ women (e.g. Lijjat) for work like food processing and tailoring. They also benefit from migrant workers.

4) Migrant workers routinely work as domestic help or as support and caregiver services in F&B and Healthcare.

5) Their knowledge of agriculture is a gift that can be utilized for work in the horticulture/arboriculture industry. Urban Agriculture in new forms like Hydroponics can also employ these migrants with a bit of training utilizing their knowledge of crops.

Therefore it is evident that the Migrants offer a lot of untapped talent maybe with a bit of short term training. Irrespective of their background/skills they are a major support of the economy of urban areas. In fact, as observed in cases like Northern Italy migrants have actually revived dying industries. (Jacobs, 1985) Being essential service providers the recognition of their contribution the city is long overdue. Their association with cities is actually valuable. Hence Their existence should be viewed as one of symbiosis than a one-way parasitic association. It is thus rational to anticipate their urban employers and the city governments to take some responsibility of their welfare. This is not merely out of charity but out of global concerns over long term sustainability. Thus Migrants should not be seen as pests but major contributors to urban economies.

The Approach—One of long term Sustainability:

A very popular history centered around rural living has typically portrayed an idyllic dreamlike existence among nature. Country living has often traditionally been depicted as a haven of pastoral fantasy with clean air and unpolluted nature and simple wholesome society. The roots of this perhaps go back before the industrial revolution--frequently compared as the closest parallel to our times. The cities then were dark soot filled full of disease while the country was unpolluted and green with wealthy aristocrats living in their country estates visiting the town intermittently mostly on business. In a similar manner Post Independent India heavily influenced by Gandhi Nehruvian ideals tended to see cities as inhuman places apologetic of their existence. The Gandhian thought of "India lives in its villages" castigated the city as

a rather unfortunate mutant offspring of development which needed to be toned down. Due to this approach and by virtue of statistical data which corroborated with this rural-centric statement made India neglect Urban development for 40 years since independence. Even today projected estimates point to only 50% urban at 2030. By Cartesian logic it is coherent to presume that India is a largely rural country. However having one of the highest rates on rural to urban migration it is important to tackle the issue from its roots. Most rural migrants move to the city for reasons of career. Rural areas rarely can compete in terms of the opportunities offered in urban areas due to their concentration of talent. This corroborates data which shows that urbanization and economic prosperity go hand in hand. UN Habitat observes:

The prosperity of nations is intimately linked to the prosperity of their cities. No country has ever achieved sustained economic growth or rapid social development without urbanizing (countries with the highest per capita income tend to be more urbanized, while low-income countries are the least urbanized). Documented evidence for source like UN, ADB highlights a distinct correlation between Urbanization and economic status as well as the dynamics of migration. Simply put greater urbanized the country greater its prosperity—less urbanized higher rural urban Migration. The magnet is again universally material aspirations. Therefore, it is imperative that the phenomenon is recognized and due policy action is undertaken for a sustainable future.

In the Post War research on city developments observes the positive equations to urbanization as economic growth (Mumford, Jacobs, Brenner, Mitchell). In her book *Cities and Wealth of Nations* Jane Jacobs observes with great scrutiny the universal connection of Urbanization with wealth and opportunities. Observing cases from across the globe -- Europe Latin America, North Africa and Asia she not only finds remarkable comparisons but points cogently to the fallacy of returning migrants bringing prosperity to their native villages. Therefore, the popular trickling-down theory of wealth from urban to rural areas is an abominable myth that has brought and can bring impending economic disaster especially to emergent economies like India. It is a universally observed that bulk of the economic activity in nations often happens around cities a universal fact that is substantiated by authentic data via reliable documentation. The documented evidence also observes another universal phenomenon across the globe -- one of rural urban migration. A distinct pattern is noted with the level of Urbanizations. Thus urbanization is actually conducive to poverty alleviation thus policies must be framed to promote this.

Migration—why it happens

Rural Urban Migration is not a recent phenomenon and has been happening for centuries. most notably since the Industrial revolution migrants have been gravitating towards cities which are epicenters of employment opportunities. The unhygienic conditions of the factory towns prompted the development of new Urban models like garden city by Ebenezer Howard. The squalor of the city logically generated dreams of a pastoral rural life –a vision popularized in India since Independence citing statistical data. A new politically correct thought centered on empowerment of villager. Noble in Theory easy to defend through statistics but empowerment with the noblest of intentions has challenges by way of the very nature of rural areas. Microenterprises battle with economy of scale issues and struggle to break even due to inability to reach minimum threshold of production. Villages fail to provide employment as it is impossible to generate the economy of scale required to sustain economic growth and opportunities.

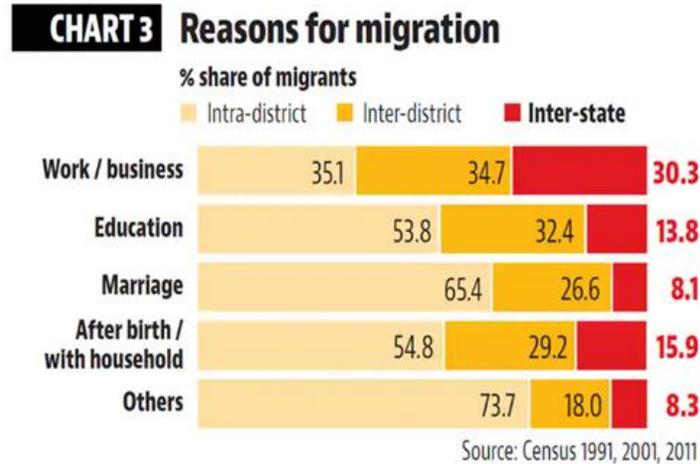
Popularly classified as *Push-Pull factors* the majority of studies show that economic conditions are the driving force behind migration. Low agricultural income, agricultural unemployment, and underemployment are considered basic factors in developing countries, driving migration to developed areas with more work opportunities.

PUSH Factors:

The push forces are those that force an individual to migrate from a village to an urban location for better prospects. Low growth, unemployment, and underdevelopment are the common push factors, as are economic stagnation circumstances, limited advancement prospects, natural resource depletion, to name a few.

Pull factors

The Pull Factors are factors that draw migrants to an urban location. Better employment opportunities, higher pay, accommodation, better (anticipated) living conditions access to better healthcare and education are common inducing migration.



It is clear to understand that one of the major reasons for migration is for livelihood. Employment opportunities in Villages are far less than in urban areas. Therefore perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that Migration is inevitable. Thus, cities are in spite of their evils still the engines of economy but lot of efforts need to be done to have a more equitable distribution of resources.

Analysis --Towards an effective solution

A study into the post-independence India shows 2 major phases the Nehruvian License Raj phase and the post Liberalization phase since 1990's. In the Former phase cities were seen as energy guzzlers evil with greed. India it was believed to be nation of villages—pastoral with family values etc. After half a century of independence India started to join the Global market and realized the significance of cities in terms of revenue by Global trade. With the opening up of the economy in the 1990's cities thus started to be seen as Growth engines of the economy.

While this sudden recognition to urbanization was definitely a much needed operation to stimulate growth it eventually has led to a slightly uneven development. With a misbalanced focus on the Metropolitan cities economic opportunities remained concentrated in major urban centers. With government impetus and FDIs; the Metropolitan Urban centers grew exponentially and attracted an ever increasing number of workers. While the migrant white collar workers could take advantage of the opportunities to make a dignified and prosperous living, it was not the case for the rural migrants. Due to the growth it led to upsurge in construction and other ancillary services attracting a lot of semi-skilled

and unskilled migrants from rural areas from far and near. Although the buoyant economy generated employment, underemployment is rampant in the labor classes. Denied fair wages even if employed they were forced to live in deplorable conditions in shanty towns around the fringes of the city or if lucky around their construction sites. As demand for work increased the migrants' numbers swelled as they brought their village mates and other family members. This sudden exodus logically put a lot of strain on the city infrastructure and the workers ironically were blamed for the squalor--which often neglecting other parts of the country. It is a vicious cycle as opportunities increase in metropolitan cities the other regions are neglected and more migration occurs putting unhealthy pressure on the city. Affordable housing still remains an elusive ideal even for the middle class for the poor labour class migrants it is more a mirage.

It is clear that empowering villages to take on cities is an elusive model since the very morphology of a rural settlement does not provide the minimal economy of scale for businesses to flourish. On the other hand, focusing on a few major metropolitan cities can put undue strain on resources and can backfire into serious negative consequences in the long run. Therefore, a middle path that is ideally a combination of the best of both needs to be devised for a sustainable habitation.

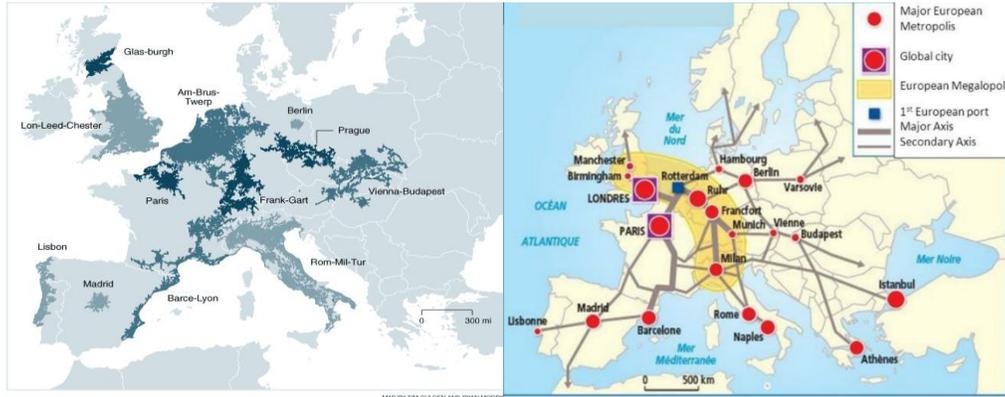
IN The Covid pandemic where preventive measures social distancing most effective mechanism to prevent disease; cities which thrive on density seemed to be totally out of place. As a reactionary observer many automatically opined a dissolution of cities and deemed to relate particularly well. This also augured well with the concept of the idea that India lives in its villages theory social distancing touted as one of the. Since in rural areas the density is low by default social distancing is second nature. While all this is true dissolution of cities is neither feasible nor realistic even if telecommuting become the matter of course in the post-Covid era. Gandhiji famously said that "India lives in its Villages". Till today India is largely Rural but Urbanization is on an accelerating pace esp. post liberalization.

Linkages --- a Sustainable Approach

Rural areas often conjure up idyllic visions of verdant landscapes with (perceived) innocent population where vices like greed and lust are unknown. The City on the other hand is an energy guzzling machine fueled by material greed and desire. The reality is far from such a black and white dichotomy as the material consumerism of the city is essential for rural survival too. We have come a long way

since the days fanning dreams of an idyllic pastoral living. As long as opportunities remain limited in rural areas; rural to urban Migration is inevitable. However urban areas esp. metropolitan cities also have their capacities for absorption. Thus it is imperative that one looks at other sustainable courses of action.

According to the UN world is 55% urban which definitely calls for the epithet 'Urban century'. However, when probed a little deep, the degree of urbanism shows wide variations and on the lower end many cities especially of emergent nations would be considered villages or effectively in a state of transition which in the developed world would still be considered as villages. While urban areas provide more opportunities for growth and livelihood than the abject poverty of rural areas; being urban does not automatically guarantee prosperity. This is not a mere phenomenon confined exclusively to the developing world but observed even among the developed economies of the west. For e.g. the opportunities offered by London far exceeds other cities elsewhere in UK. It has been observed in recent times (Sassen 2000) except for a few exceptions like Germany and USA opportunities tend to cling in major urban centers. However even in Germany opportunities in cities like Frankfurt and Munich are greater than Stuttgart or Magdeburg. Realizing this pitfall European Governments have been instrumental in encouraging regional conurbations often centered around a few vibrant cities e.g. Randstad around Amsterdam. (K. Pain 2008, P. H. Pain 2006) Since globally city regions are a strongly entrenched phenomenon perhaps this regional approach can be developed to achieve a better rural urban balance. The idea behind region of Randstad is to ease the pressure off large cities like Amsterdam by creating an Urban Constellation. Created to be mutually beneficial it is significant to note that in most cases the relationship is largely monocentric with large cities like Amsterdam (in case of Randstad) largely dominating.



Europe: Map showing the major Cities in Europe with European Megalopolis the famous “Banana” highlighting the most important economic corridor of the region.

Table outlining character of major Urban Regions of Europe¹

Source: Peter Hall and Kathy Pain --The Polycentric Metropolis: Learning from Mega-City Regions in Europe

SE England	London region	Monocentric
Randstad	Amsterdam ,Rotterdam Utrecht, the Hague	Monocentric
Central Belgium	Brussels Antwerp	Dual Node
Rhine-Ruhr	Dusseldorf, Koln, Dortmund, Essen Bonn, Duisburg	PolyCentric
Rhine Main	Frankfurt region dominated by Frankfurt	Monocentric
Paris Region	Paris and Environs	Monocentric

While this challenge is felt universally across the globe, the problem is more acute in the developing world due to higher disparities. Little of surprise that the problems of rural urban migration esp. to larger urban centres is more acute in developing countries. Since Creating opportunities in villages remain an elusive ideal due to near impossible economies of scale ---- it is imperative that we inquire into new ways of urbanization in which secondary and tertiary cities fill the vacuum. Since regional growth is universal (even in Africa the west African coast has galvanized into one can perhaps look at a

system of cities not as a mere satellite growth but a holistic system that is mutually beneficial as observed in Europe.

While the focus on metropolitan cities has been around on grounds engines of economy the neglect of lesser order small towns has put unsustainable pressure on large cities. About half of the world's urban dwellers live in neighbourhoods of fewer than 500,000 inhabitants or secondary settlements, despite the fact that one out of every eight people reside in one of the world's 33 megacities. Despite the fact that bigger towns have more capital and economic clout than smaller cities, recent analysis suggests that size does not determine fate. In terms of job growth, competition, and international trade,

UN–Habitat report observes “More and more people both in the North and South are moving outside the city to satellite” or dormitory cities and suburban neighbourhoods, taking advantage of accommodation that can be more affordable than in central areas, with lower densities and sometimes a better quality of life in certain ways.” A World Bank report on cities found that often secondary cities outperformed many larger cities in terms of job growth, competitiveness, and foreign direct investment. Mexico's Saltillo, Morocco's Meknes, India's Coimbatore, Turkey's Gaziantep, Colombia's Bucaramanga, Nigeria's Onitsha, and China's Changsha to name a few. In case of developing economies like India the small and medium towns often recorded to demonstrate higher rates of Urbanization.

The aggrandization of cities into mega-regions, urban corridors, and city-regions that function as a single economic entity propagates self-reinforcing, cumulative growth trends that contribute significantly to global economic activity. Embracing this aspect can effectively divert development to the smaller town. However as learnt from the European examples a conurbation involving a metro city with a constellation of small-town can perhaps bring in more economic vibrancy. Although it is likely that the mother city will be dominant but by connecting the smaller town within a travel radius of an hours commute can create a system where one can typically live comfortably in small towns taking advantage of its affordable housing and optimal density for the advantages of urban living. The mother city connected by hi speed transport can be via commute for availing higher order facility like specialized health care or premium retail. Since these are not requirements on a regular basis having them in approachable proximity can suffice.

Therefore it may be asserted that creating a stellar arrangement centered (not overshadowed but a symbiotic arrangement) around the mother city with dormitory towns connected with dense development round movement / growth corridors with increasing density in outlying hubs and Central cores. The most important aspect is the way this can check sprawl- Growth is not arrested but directed to a more sustainable pattern.

Therefore this arrangement which combines the best of Rural and Urban offers the following advantages :

- 1) They get urban facilities close by
- 2) They can work in dignity in a domain expertise perhaps with a bit of training.
- 3) Living in dignity they do not encroach . Thus natural sensitive areas are not destroyed. This helps in curbing climate change.

Urbanization can play a key role in eradicating rural poverty.

- Research in India found that an increase of 200,000 in the urban population resulted in a decrease of 1.3 to 2.6 per cent in rural poverty. Overall, these urban-rural linkages were behind a reduction of 13 to 25 per cent in rural poverty in India between 1983 and 1999.
- In Vietnam, a more recent study (2006-2008) found that rural households in highly urbanized provinces featured higher income and income growth than rural households.

---World Cities Report 2016 UN-Habitat

Thus we have to look at physical development as a system of territorialization where rural and urban are not discrete unrelated entities but part of an integrated system of habitation. Cities may offer greater economic potential but output must be more equitably distributed not necessarily with blanket equality which can lead to sluggish growth well realized during the protectionist era of Licenseraj in India. Metropolitan city regions which undoubtedly serve as engines of the economy need lot of economic output from various industries from heavy industries to hospitality. In such a scenario an urban

conurbation which has a mixed economy of manufacturing and service sectors offers manifold advantages.

- 1) Firstly it offers a more rounded economic health not dependent heavily on supply and demand
- 2) The mix by default offers a variation which through proper planning can exploit the mutual benefit and symbiotic reciprocity.
- 3) A Variety of players (businesses) can gain from the economic growth and not just the MNC tertiary Sector which largely employs a highly qualified labour pool.
- 4) Offering a mix of industries promotes scope for employment across cadres a very important factor for absorbing Migrant Population in meaningful employment.
- 5) It is common occurrence that over time real estate forces prices to unrealistically high levels far beyond the reach of many buyers esp. in housing. While a higher FSI comparable to cities like Singapore or New York may suffice to accommodate a larger section of the skilled workers it can never offer realistically low cost shelter for the working class. Property values typically decrease with distance. Considering this factor the second tier cities can actually leverage this to pride in achieving:
 - a) affordable shelter
 - b) a healthier mix of residents.
- 6) Secondary cities can also function as a transit for those migrating to the villages. While opportunities may be modest it can be less of a shock and provide affordable living. As one grows professionally one can avail of the services of the large town if required without sacrificing on dignified life as well as creating an urban form totally discordant with rural systems.

To summarize city form esp. larger metropolitan cities are not merely the city proper but should be a greater Urban conurbation with secondary towns connected by high-speed communication systems (note High speed transportation and communication often follow same pathways). This will lead to a more equitable distribution of wealth and take the pressure off the main city. MSME can make a significant contribution while enjoying the advantage of connecting to corporate hubs for higher order service like marketing and exports.

CONCLUSION

We are at the crossroads in time where we have seen a lot of extreme dogmas which have proven fallacies. It is therefore time to be realistic and appropriate and work towards making a significant improvement than idiosyncratic visions fanning intellectual ego. Pastoral romantic visions of rural life have turned out a mirage and therefore it is imperative to take Migration as a reality a given a pressing issue that needs to be addressed. Deeply rooted the issue is actually the manifestation of lot of other social challenges. The issues must be tackled holistically for achieving sustainable future. Last but not the least a major shift in mindset that views the issue without the ubiquitous scorn and pity Migrants must be seen not as pests but assets to be integrated and treated with dignity in Urban areas. UN Habitat SDG talks about inclusiveness and migrants are in dire need for such efforts. Every pandemic in history has decimated the old and often paved the way for the new. Thus we must learn our lessons from history and address this Covid pandemic and attempt to Build Back Better with a more inclusive and sustainable approach to cities and human life as a whole. Ending with a note of optimism we must recollect the words of UN General Secretary, Ban Ki-moon "Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety and a better future. It is part of the social fabric, part of our very make-up as a human family".

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