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Notes on Rurality or The Theoretical Usefulness of the *Not*-Urban

I

In explicating Marx's theory of the differentiation and division of labor, Neil Smith observed that at the "general" scale of labor division, capitalism is "historically founded upon the division between industry and agriculture." As such, the historical separation of town and country is "inherited" by early capitalism as a "historical and logical foundation" of the social division of labor. [1] With the advent of capitalism, this separation becomes the foundation for the "further division of labour," which in turn "erodes" the preexisting separation of town and country. [2] This is visible in the progressive urbanization of the countryside, both in terms of the industrialization of agricultural practices, as well as outward displacement of industrial production to the peripheries of cities, where capital's "tendency toward equalization" has "won out over the differentiation of space." More recently, a number of scholars have attempted to theorize the ubiquity of the "urban condition" by urging the social sciences to more deeply consider the centrifugal waves of political, financial, and environmental influence emanating from cities. [3] Others have attempted to reinscribe the epistemic enclosure of "the urban" as a category. Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid's formulation of "planetary urbanization" is one that has gained particular prominence in the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, urban studies, and geography. [4]

According to Brenner and Schmid's framework, as regulations, policies, and "rule regimes" are reconstituted both upward at transnational scales and downward at national and subnational scales, the spatial outcomes of neoliberal restructuring can be understood, most precisely, as "planetary" phenomena. [5] This conception of urbanization surpasses and radically rescales the spatial–political extents of its influence beyond any traditional conception of a bounded, city-centric urban scale. In doing so, it dismantles the traditional dialectic of the urban and the rural, often subsuming and enveloping vastly differentiated and highly uneven landscapes. Brenner and Schmid have described this absorption of the rural in terms of "the disintegration of the hinterland" and "the disappearance of nature." [6] The former refers to the operationalization of the countryside as the "back-end" or the "back-of-house" of global supply chains and logistics infrastructure. The latter refers to the ecological fallout of rapid urban growth in terms of its impact on such

[1] Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA, and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984). Smith identifies four abstract scales at which the division of labor and the division of capital, when "folded together," take place: (i) the *general* "societal" scale, where labor and capital are divided into different "departments"—the level at which an economy is divided and differentiated based on the use value of their products in the "process of the reproduction of capital" such as productive consumption, individual consumption, military consumption, etc.; (ii) the *particular* scale where they are divided into different "sectors" of the economy that are based on the "immediate use-value" of their products; (iii) the scale of *individual capitals,* which are units differentiated by ownership (see note 3); and (iv) the *detail* scale where labor is divided "within the workplace."

[2] Smith, *Uneven Development,* 148.

[3] See Ash Amin, "Lively Infrastructure," *Theory, Culture & Society,* vol. 31 (December 2014): 137–161, link, as well as Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, Cities: *Reimagining the Urban* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002).

[4] See, for instance, Neil Brenner, "Theses on Urbanization," *Public Culture,* vol. 25, no. 1 (2013): 85–114, link; Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, "Planetary Urbanisation," in *Urban Constellations,* ed. Matthew Gandy (Berlin: Jovis, 2011), 10–14; Brenner and Schmid, "The Urban Age in Question," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* vol. 38, no. 3 (2014): 731–755, link; Brenner and Schmid, "Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban?," *City,* vol. 19, no. 1 (2015): 151–182, link.

[5] Neil Brenner, David J. Madden, and David Wachsmuth, "Assemblage Urbanism and the Challenges of Critical Urban Theory," *City,* vol. 15, no. 2 (2011): 225–240, link.

natural systems and resources as wetlands, forests, lakes, glaciers, and the atmosphere, describing their "interconnectedness" with the "rhythms" of urbanization. [7] Brenner and Schmid argue that the category of the urban as a spatial and morphological descriptor has to be reformulated as a "theoretical" category that can capaciously accommodate all that was previously considered exurban or nonurban, while at the same time discarding the epistemological coin of the urban–rural where "the urban" (the city) and the "nonurban" (everything that is not the city) are a mutually reinforcing, dialectical pair.

Brenner's work on planetary urbanization has been anticipated by two decades of copious writing on scale, territory, governance, and politics. [8] As a prominent member of the generation of Anglophone scholars that rediscovered Henri Lefebvre in the 1990s, much of Brenner's work can be seen as an elaboration of Lefebvre's work from the late 1960s, whose reframing of the urban question as a geographical problem forms the theoretical underpinning of Brenner's work. Indeed, as Brenner points out, the use of term *planetary* as prepositive appellation to urbanization is a restatement of Lefebvre's "*mondialisation*," first used to express the "becoming-worldwide" of state power and its institutional mechanisms with the incipient rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s and '80s. [9]

In a concise yet powerful intervention, Ananya Roy tests the theory of planetary urbanization through her own fieldwork in the peri-urban municipalities of Kolkata, where the categories of "town" and "village" are highly unstable, continually reshaped by governmental practices. [10] Roy argues that "the urban and the rural are governmental categories" that provide the analytical bases for understanding the "processes through which the urban is made, lived, and contested." These processes, she adds, are "necessarily incomplete and uneven." [11] In the context of India, the urban as a category of formal administration is distinct from, and often inconsistent with, the socio-spatial and morphological features that characterize "the urban." The rural, in Roy's reading, does not simply constitute the "not-urban" but is a "constitutive outside" of the urban that is in constant negotiation with the processes of urbanization in the Global South. [12] While acknowledging the usefulness of Brenner and Schmid's planetary urbanization as a global meta-theory, Roy questions their call to discard the epistemological category of the rural or the putative nonurban. Contrary to their claim that the erstwhile "rural outside" is now "internalized" within urbanization processes, Roy argues that the category of "the outside" is not a resurrection of urban–rural binarism but rather constitutes places that "allow us to think about the urban as an incomplete and contingent process as well as an undecidable category." [13] While Roy makes an intervention that challenges theory at the point of its application, the problem of the rural as a category is significantly older in urban theoretical discourse.

II

While Lefebvre is seen as the preeminent philosopher of urban space in the twentieth century, his work on the *urban* and his conception of "urban life" can be understood only in relation to all that is *not* urban. For Lefebvre, the urban was best examined through the historical dialectic of the town and the countryside, where the two are conceived in relation to each other. This

[6] Brenner and Schmid, "Planetary Urbanisation," 12.

[7] Brenner and Schmid, "Planetary Urbanisation," 12.

[8] See Brenner's "Global, Fragments, Hierarchical: Henri Lefebvre's Geographies of Globalization," *Public Culture,* vol. 10, no. 1 (1997): 135–167, link; "The Urban Question as a Scale Question: Reflections on Henri Lefebvre, Urban Theory and the Politics of Scale," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* vol. 24, no. 2 (2000): 361–378, link; "The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration," *Progress in Human Geography,* vol. 25, no. 4 (2001): 591–614, link.

[9] Brenner, Madden, and Wachsmuth, "Assemblage Urbanism and The Challenges of Critical Urban Theory," 225–240. See also Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, "Introduction," in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays Henri Lefebvre*, eds. Brenner and Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 1–51.

[10] Roy, "What Is Urban about Critical Urban Theory?," *Urban Geography,* vol. 37, no. 6 (2015): 810–823, link.

[11] Roy, "What Is Urban about Critical Urban Theory?," 7.

[12] Roy, "What Is Urban about Critical Urban Theory?," 7.

[13] Roy, "What Is Urban about Critical Urban Theory?," 10.

relationship, however, is not static or permanent but mediated by advances in technology as well as the historical reconfiguration of politico-economic structures. Stuart Elden describes this mediation as follows:

> UNTIL THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY, SUGGESTS LEFEBVRE, THE TOWN WAS CONCEIVED IN OPPOSITION TO THE COUNTRYSIDE: THE COUNTRYSIDE WAS SITUATED BETWEEN THE TOWN AND NATURE. THIS IS A RELATIONSHIP OF THREE TERMS. IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, HOWEVER, THIS OPPOSITION WAS REVERSED AND THE COUNTRY IS NOW SEEN AND CONCEIVED IN RELATION TO THE CITY: 'THE SPECIFIC WEIGHT OF EACH TERM HAS ALTERED.' THE THREE TERMS IN EXISTING REALITY ARE *RURALITY, URBAN FABRIC* AND *CENTRALITY.* (EMPHASIS ADDED) [14]

The historical dialectic of the urban and the nonurban is accompanied by the tripartite formulation of rurality, urban fabric, and centrality. Pure rurality and pure urbanity represent the two poles of Lefebvre's urban–rural gradient. [15] For Lefebvre, the countryside has always been in a condition of instrumentalization, the magnitude of which has been determined by the historical evolution of "the city" from its ancient, pre-agricultural origins to the industrialized, capitalist city. As Elden describes the transformation of the polar influence of one over the other, "For long periods, Lefebvre suggests, the city was parasitic on the countryside, only providing 'non-productive functions—military, administrative, political', and it was only with the advent of capitalism that 'the city supplants the countryside in respect of productive work.'" [16] In other words, the countryside has always been instrumentalized socially, culturally, symbolically, and productively by various forms of the city.

The systematic excavation of the past to create a scaffolding for comprehending social relations in the present ("historico-genetic," in his words) is an important component of Lefebvre's "regressive/progressive" methodology of sociological analysis. [17] This mode of analysis is a combinatory approach that employs history and sociology as two sides of the same analytical coin. Writing on rural sociology, Lefebvre is critical of the "empiricism" and "statistical formalism" in the work of American rural sociologists, which is unable to account for the "ancient upheavals" that form the sedimentary layers upon which present-day rural life unfolds, arguing that even modern rural "reality" has a "historical thickness" that contains operative as well as vestigial aspects of the "archaic." [18]

This conception of the rural as an archaic construction, continuously molded by changes in modes of production as well as the changing political, financial, juridical, and social characteristics of the city, productively complicates the relationship between "the rural" and "the urban." Lefebvre's formulation of the "horizontal–vertical" complexity of the rural offers a loose constitutive fiber that might be pulled apart from the tightly woven theoretical schema of planetary urbanization. [19] For Lefebvre, the horizontal complexity of the rural refers to the diversity of agricultural technology and farming practices that exist at the same time in different geographies. Its vertical complexity, on the other hand, refers to "formations that differ in date and age but coex-

[14] Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (London: Continuum, 2005), 129.

[15] For a diagrammatic illustration and analysis of Lefebvre's 0–100 schema of urbanization, see Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*, 131–32.

[16] Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*, 130.

[17] Eleonore Kofman, "Introduction to 'The Country and the City,'" in Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings, eds. Stuart Elden, Elizabeth Lebas, and Eleonore Kofman (London: Continuum, 2003), 109. See also Lukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 53.

[18] Henri Lefebvre, "The Country and the City," in *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings*, 115–116.

[19] It must be noted that Brenner and Schmid have been attentive to critiques of planetary urbanization from within the disciplines of urban studies and geography. See Brenner's response to recent criticism in the working paper "Debating Planetary Urbanization: For an Engaged Pluralism" (2017), link.

ist"—moments of simultaneity between the archaic and the contemporary as observed in reality. [20] Therefore, one might posit that the archaic and contemporary "formations" of the rural can be reconstituted endlessly in different permutations but can never be dismantled entirely. As such, the category of the rural has attendant to it a set of qualitative values that might recede and *almost* disappear but never cease to exist. In other words, even though the category of the rural might become weak to the point of perceptual invisibility, its symbolic and cultural constructions persist.

Lefebvre's historical dialectic of the urban (town) and the nonurban (countryside) is accompanied by a series of other, competing dialectics: namely nature and culture (society), product and oeuvre, and use-value and exchange-value. These concatenated dialectics raise the question of what constitutes "urban life": a uniquely Lefebvrian concept that diverges from a purely materialist understanding of "life" in the urban context. Writing in *Le Droit à la Ville* in 1968, he characterizes urban life as including "original mediations between town, country and nature." He elaborates, "[A]s the village, whose relationship with the city, in history and in actuality, is far from being well known…These mediations cannot be understood as such by city dwellers without symbolisms and *representations* (ideological and imaginary) of nature and the countryside." Urban life and "the urban" are therefore necessarily imbricated in the "representations" of the *not*-urban—representations that, following Roy, continue to persist and will do so in perpetuity, if only to frustrate any unitary ontology of "the urban without an outside."

Moreover, these "representations" complicate the question of mediation. Lefebvre addresses this mediation by cataloging the historical evolution of the city and its concomitant modes of production, from its ancient manifestations to the proto-capitalist feudal city to the industrialized capitalist city. Each of these states of the city instrumentalizes the countryside in different ways. Lefebvre likens this instrumentalization to a "desecration." [21] To understand the import of this term, one must unpack the dialectic of "production" and "oeuvre." Lefebvre describes the countryside—the site of urban/rural mediation—as the "place of production." This includes all modes of production, from the earliest forms of subsistence farming to modern industrial production units. The "landscape," on the other hand, is an "oeuvre." He elaborates, "This *oeuvre* emerges from the earth slowly moulded, linked originally to the groups which occupy it by a reciprocal consecration, later to be desecrated by the city and urban life (which capture this consecration, condense it, then dissolve it over through the ages by absorbing it into rationality)." [22] In this manner, Lefebvre emphasizes the rural as a qualitative category that has primordial historical and social dimensions. The rural has *always* been operationalized, and these interventions ("consecration" and "desecration") lend this "ground" a "sacred-damned character." [23] What is made clear in this characterization is Lefebvre's insistence that the urban and the putative nonurban (rural) constitute an ontological whole, perpetually locked in a fluctuating cycle of mediation: the dialectic of urbanity and rurality ensures that one cannot "neutralize" the other, due, precisely, to their historically constitutive imbrication—one cannot "lose itself" in the other, but they can influence each other based on the structural factors of a particular period of time. [24]

Lefebvre's somewhat idiosyncratic fascination with the rural in his

[20] Lefebvre, "Perspectives on Rural Sociology," in *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings*, 113.

[21] Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," in *Writings on Cities* by Henri Lefebvre, eds. and trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 118.

[22] Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," 118.

[23] Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," 118-19.

[24] Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," 120.

writings of the 1950s and 1960s can perhaps be best understood in the context of his earliest intellectual work: empirical fieldwork conducted in small rural communities in the French Pyrenees' Campan Valley, which he began in 1943. [25] While an analysis of Lefebvre's writing on rural sociology falls outside the scope of this essay, it is important nonetheless to contextualize Lefebvre's research from the period between 1943 and 1968 in a rapidly modernizing France. Indeed, the transformation of Lefebvre's work, from his early analyses of peasant communities and rural life to his interest in urbanity and the social production of space, parallels the transformation of France—provincial France and the countryside, in particular—in the decade following the Second World War. Lukasz Stanek identifies Lefebvre's research on the new town of Mourenx as the hinge between his work on the rural and his growing interest in urban life in the late 1950s. He writes, "These two sources of Lefebvre's research on space—the agrarian question and the critiques of everyday life—came together in his experience of the construction of the new town of Mourenx in the *Departement des Pyrenees Altantique*. In *Le temps des meprises*, Lefebvre described his visit to Mourenx as the singular event that triggered his interest in urban society." [26] For Lefebvre, the construction of Mourenx is emblematic of "the implantation of an industrial environment in the rural environment." Here, the "product" of the countryside (in the case of Mourenx, the discovery of oil and gas deposits in the nearby town of Lacq), degrades the "oeuvre" of the landscape and radically reconstitutes the fabric of the existing rural landscape.

[25] Lefebvre's interest in the agrarian and concepts such as the urban and "the everyday" did not sit well with the orthodox Marxist intellectualism of the French Communist Party, of which Lefebvre was a member until 1958. For more, see Chris Butler, *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial Politics, Everyday Life and The Right to The City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

[26] Lukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 17.

III

AT DHOLERA INDUSTRIAL CITY, THE LARGEST INVESTMENT NODE ON THE DMICDC GROWTH CORRIDOR, YOU CAN REALIZE ALL YOUR BUSINESS DREAMS AND AMBITIONS, TODAY. SPREAD OVER AN AREA OF 920 SQUARE KILOMETERS AND OFFERING INFINITE POSSIBILITIES OF GROWTH WITH ADVANCED INFRASTRUCTURE, SUPERIOR CONNECTIVITY, SUSTAINABILITY LEAD (SIC) INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING, A FRAMEWORK FOR AUTONOMY, FAST-TRACK APPROVALS AND MORE, THERE'S NO BETTER PLACE TO LEAP FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE.

—DHOLERA INDUSTRIAL CITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED [27]

[27] Dholera Industrial City Development Corporation Limited, link.

In a manner analogous to Brenner and Schmid, a number of scholars have attempted to revisit the "agrarian question" in light of late capitalist and neoliberal restructuring. Farshad Araghi, for instance, offers a conceptual trajectory that recognizes hyper-urbanization as a reality but approaches the question from the categorical side of rurality. In a form of analysis that is self-described as "world historical," Araghi explicates the constitutive relationship of "globalization" and "depeasantization" in properly spatial terms by claiming that "global hyperurbanization" is contingent on, and coeval with, the processes of "global deruralization." [28] He describes the process of deruralization as "…the constriction of global rural space via depopulation, an expansion

[28] Farshad Araghi, "The Invisible Hand and the Visible Foot: Peasants, Dispossession, and Globalization," in *Peasants and Globalization: Political economy, Rural Transformation, and the Agrarian Question*, eds. A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi and Cristóbal Kay (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 112. See also Araghi, "The Great Global Enclosure of Our Times: Peasants and the Agrarian Question at the End of the Twentieth Century," in *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment*, eds. Frederick H. Buttel, Fred Magdoff, and John Bellamy Foster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

of enclosed suburbias and exurbias, and the *increasing encroachment of industrial, agro-commercial, information and service economies into what was formerly rural space* (emphasis added)." [29] Araghi's argument, while elementary, identifies that the "space of social relations" under regimes of postcolonial neoliberal globalism is produced by the systematic and structural "dispossession by displacement" of peasantries. [30]

Nowhere is this displacement more palpable than in the agrarian landscapes of the Global South that form the frontiers of neoliberal urbaniza-tion. In the context of postcolonial India, the urban and the not-urban are mutually constitutive as epistemo-ontological categories. Take the case of the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC). When (and if) completed, it will be the largest and most expensive infrastructure project ever undertaken in the Indian subcontinent. Stretching between Delhi and Mumbai, the DMIC—termed a "mega-project" in infrastructural parlance—is projected to cost over $100 billion and produce twenty-four "new" cities along a 1,500-kilometer-long "Dedicated Freight Corridor" (DFC): a freight rail spine that will radically reduce the travel time of goods between India's northern states and the ports on its western coast.

A fertile convention of the global consultants responsible for the pro-duction of contemporary urbanization, the DMIC is an exemplar of a new form of managerial governmentality inscribing new sets of relationships between territory and capital through the construction of purportedly "smart" cities on greenfield sites—agrarian landscapes that are as yet "undeveloped." [31] The largest and most prominent of these is the Dholera Special Investment Region (DSIR) in the western state of Gujarat. Projected to occupy a total area of 920 square kilometers (the city of Mumbai, by comparison is about 600 square kilometers), the DSIR, when completed, will overwrite/superimpose itself over what is now a smattering of small villages in the *bhal* region of Gurajat—a tidal flat that extends approximately 15 kilometers inland from the coast of the Gulf of Khambat. Like tidal flats around the world, this region is inundated with seawater during high tide and the monsoon season. [32] The mixing of saltwater and freshwater makes the soil of this region highly saline—a geologi-cal characteristic that is used as the basis for categorizing vast swathes of its landscape as "barren" or "waste." In reality, however, the villages in the region are predominantly agricultural, engaged in a combination of subsistence as

[29] Araghi, "The Invisible Hand and the Visible Foot," 119.

[30] Araghi's formulation of dispossession is sympathetic to Harvey's concept of "accumulation by dispossession"—an ongoing historical process of accumulation based on "predation, fraud, and violence" that accompanies and often replaces accumulation by means of expanded reproduction. For more, see Harvey "The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession," *Socialist Register*, vol. 40 (2004): 63–87.

[31] Ayona Datta, "New Urban Utopias of Postcolonial India: 'Entrepreneurial urbanization' in Dholera Smart City, Gujarat," *Dialogues in Human Geography*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2015): 3–22, link.

[32] SJ Vyas and AJ Joshi, "Quantitative Study of Coastal Flora of 'Bhal' Region in Gujarat," *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, vol. 4, no. 5 (2015): 337–341.
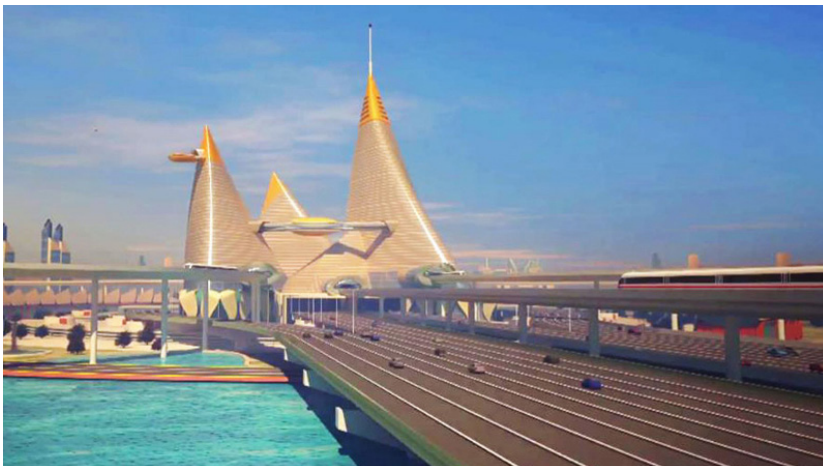
Still from the Dholera Special Investment Region [DSIR] concept video depicting one of the eight "smart cities" included in phase one of the DMIC.

well as small-scale commercial farming and livestock husbandry. Their survival and sustenance has depended on their ability to develop agricultural practices suited to saline environments, in spite of having been denied access to modern infrastructure for irrigation and salinity remediation. This eliding of salinity with agricultural submarginality is a recurring theme in official representations of the region, which characterize it as unproductive, and therefore expendable for the purposes of urbanization and industrial development. [33]

As one approaches the DSIR from the state capital, Ahmedabad, the frequency of billboards lining National Highway 47 approaches a dizzying pace—"7 Oak Golden City" flashes by, followed almost immediately by "Dholera Prime Home." Amid these advertisements for private residential enclaves, an unassuming blue signboard marks the beginning of the Dholera Activation Area: an "industrial park" that will occupy 22.5 square kilometers (4.25 percent) of the total area of the DSIR. The Activation Area is the pilot project that is anticipated to trigger investments in the rest of the DSIR. The village of Dholera, from which the DSIR borrows its name, lies within this area. Dholera itself is neither the most populous nor the largest of the twenty-two villages that make up the DSIR. It is, however, the most prominent site of interventions pertaining to the region's development. By Indian standards, Dholera is a small village. While the total area of land within its revenue boundary is around forty-five square kilometers, its inhabited core occupies less than one square kilometer of land. Its most distinctive features include a pond and a Hindu temple dating from the early nineteenth century. It has a population of around 2,800, with approximately 42 percent of its total workforce engaged in agricultural activities according to the 2011 national census. When seen in the context of the DSIR and its mammoth 920 square kilometers, Dholera registers as a geographical nonentity—a statistical blip accounting for just over 0.04 percent of the total land area. In terms of population, its statistical insignificance is starker still. Yet Dholera is one of the more "prosperous" of the twenty-two villages that constitute DSIR, for only 12 percent of its workforce is involved in "marginal activity." [34] Take, for instance, the neighboring village of Bhimtalav, which has a population of less than 122 with almost half its workforce engaged

[33] See the 2014 Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA) prepared by ABC Techno Labs for the Dholera International Project. In the report, the word *saline* is repeatedly paired with the word *barren* to form a compound phrase, "saline and (therefore) barren" (ES-1, ES-7, ES-13, 2-2, 3-47, 4-5), link.

[34] The Indian census definition for "marginal activity" is "those who did not work for at least 183 days in the preceding twelve months to the census taking," link.

in marginal activity. Or Mahadevpura, where more than 70 percent of the total workforce is involved in marginal work.

These demographic statistics are invoked not to draw obvious contradistinctions between "reality-on-the-ground" and the delirious proclamations of "smart city," "global-city," and "fast-track approvals," that populate official documents and media reports, but to illustrate the statistical inconsequence of the agrarian populations that inhabit the territories that the DSIR and, by extension, the DMIC, seek to bring under their control. [35] The villages of the DSIR are not, by any means, representative of all the villages affected by the DMIC in other parts of the country. Neither are they representative of all villages in Gujarat. Instead, they represent marginalized populations that occupy territories that are fertile sites of neoliberal accumulation. Indeed, the surplus value fertility of these territories is induced and amplified by the historical marginality of its populations. Techno-managerial faith internalizes statistical representations of agricultural productivity, submarginality, and prosperity,

[35] See Amitabh Kant, "The Burden of Urban Appeal," *India Today*, March 17, 2014, 11, link. Kant is the former CEO of the DMIC.

The village of Dholera, after which the DSIR is named. Courtesy of the author.

The village of Dholera, after which the DSIR is named. Courtesy of the author.

The village of Bhimtalav, which has a population of less than 122. Courtesy of the author.

drawing from this base of archaic marginality to reconstitute the relationship between the urban "inside" and the rural "outside." This form of "analytical reason," as Lefebvre reminds us, "gives itself as its own aim, for its own meaning." [36] In the DSIR, this form of reason motivates regulatory frameworks that combine "inherited" and new tools of land acquisition to produce "particular pattern[s] of dispossession of peasants and landless farmers." [37]

In many ways, the DMIC is a consummate project of extended—or "planetary"—urbanization, one that seeks to concentrate global neoliberal accumulation investment along a Fordist-Keynesian infrastructural spine imposed on heretofore undeveloped landscapes. The DFC functions as the *legitimating infrastructure* that allows the Indian state to enact the multiscalar processes of reterritorialization, and in doing so, to produce "new territorial configurations" formatted for capitalist growth. [38] It is important here to note the DFC's typological specificity—a freight-railway—as the basis for a project of corridor urbanization. It stands in sharp contradistinction to earlier "corridor projects" in India that were typically based along highways and expressways. In this transformation of a provisioning infrastructural system into a "speculative" infrastructural network that is "intended to engender urban growth rather than service [it]," we see that the production of the new space of the DMIC necessarily relies on the availability of agrarian landscapes heretofore undeveloped or not-urban. [39] The DMIC, in other words, can be thought of as an *urbanization machine*.

Arun Agrawal and K. Sivaramakrishnan make an imaginative provocation in considering the "hybrid landscapes" of agrarian India as "agrarian environments"—a "single analytical construct" that acknowledges the intertwining of "the agrarian" and "the environmental," manifest in landscapes that are "malleable and plastic." [40] They write:

AGRARIAN ENVIRONMENTS… HAVE TO BE COMPREHENDED AS BEING PART OF A *BIOPHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT THAT ALWAYS INCLUDES THE URBAN AND THE NONURBAN,* THE ARABLE AND THE NONARABLE, THE OTHER AREAS THAT

[36] Lefebvre, "The Country and the City," 82.

[37] Ayona Datta, "New Urban Utopias of Postcolonial India," 62.

[38] Erik Swyngedouw, "Communication, Mobility, and the Struggle for Power over Space," in *Transportation and Communications Innovation in Europe*, eds. G. Giannopoulos and A. Gillespie (London and New York: Belhaven, 1993), 306. Quoted in Steve Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[39] Janaki Nair, "Indian Urbanism and the Terrain of the Law," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 50, no. 36 (2015): 56.

[40] Arun Agrawal and K. Sivaramakrishnan, "Introduction: Agrarian Environments," in *Agrarian Environments: Resources, Representations, and Rule in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 1, 6.

ARE INTEGRALLY LINKED TO THE WORLD OF AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT AND THEIR ALLIED SOCIAL-ECONOMIC RELATIONS… IN THE LAST THIRTY YEARS, AIR, WATER, FORESTS, PASTURES, FISHERIES, AND WILDLIFE HAVE TAKEN SHAPE AS DISTINCT REALMS IN NATURE, SHORED UP BY SEPARATE, ELABORATE, LEGAL-INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES. WE MUST LEARN HOW TO NAVIGATE *ACROSS* THESE DOMAINS IN THE SEARCH TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SUBJECT MATTER AND THE PROBLEMS THAT INTEREST US. (EMPHASIS ADDED) [41]

[41] Agrawal and Sivaramakrishnan, "Introduction," 7.

This statement, while somewhat broad and polemical, offers a methodologically analogous alternative to planetary urbanization. "Agrarian environments" takes as its point of origin the "outside" of planetary urbanization—the category of the not-urban. At the same time, it dispenses with the binary separation of "the natural from the human" by proposing an ontology where nature and social relations are co-constitutive. [42] Neither synthesized with the notion of planetary urbanization, nor providing an easy fix to the problem of rurality, as a concept it is predicated on the reconstruction of epistemic categories. As such, it forms a productive critical companion to planetary urbanization—producing, *vide* Foucault, a conceptual apparatus sufficiently capacious to accommodate the actually existing characteristics of the sites of mega-urbanization in the agrarian South.

[42] Agrawal and Sivaramakrishnan, "Introduction," 2.

This brief account of the DSIR provides but one example of the collision between the urbanizing imperative of a machine such as the DMIC and the conditions of rurality it has to contend with. As the protagonists of neoliberal development descend upon southern landscapes in search of surplus value, the essential ability to perform "actions at a distance" is repeatedly undermined as they come into contact with agrarian environments and the subjects that inhabit them.

Contrary to the apprehensions of the theorists of planetary urbanization, the urban does not simply "internalize" the rural. Rather, rurality persists in intense yet weak forms. Indeed, as Lefebvre argues, "within the mesh of urban fabric survive islets and islands of 'pure' rurality, often (but not always) poor areas with ageing peasants, badly 'integrated', stripped of what had been the nobility of peasant life in times of greatest misery and of oppression." [43] In this manner, the marginality of the existing population intensifies downward: the urbanizing imperative of managerial faith is unable to render rurality as anything other than islets of marginal existence, precariously embalmed in "buffer zones." Their populations—their agrarian relations now transformed—are expected to submit to "shift in livelihoods from agrarian to non-agrarian and [the] service sector." [44][45]

[43] Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," 72.

[44] SENES Consultants India, "Environmental Impact Assessment of Dholera Special Investment Region (DSIR) in Gujarat" (2013), 377, link.

Lefebvre's urban mesh, as manifest in the techno-managerial actions of the DMIC, rely on an epistemic *refusal of the rural* to smooth over variegated regional economies and their attendant morphologies. However, it does so with great difficulty and limited success: its topology is uneven, unbounded, and scale-less with punctures, holes, and creases. While the mesh conveys new "urban life," rurality does not disappear. It persists in the constitution of the urban through "symbols and representations" as well as the politics and practices of "nature and the countryside." [46] Taking seriously Brenner's invitation

[45] Unsurprisingly, the villages affected by the DSIR are the epicenter for local and regional activism by a coalition of agriculturists and landowners inveighing against the mechanisms of land acquisition employed by the state to develop the DSIR. For more, see Preeti Sampat and Simi Sunny, "Dholera and the Myth of Voluntary Land Pooling," *Socio-Legal Review*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2016): 1–17.

to link debates on "the right to the city" to "a broader politics of the global commons…being fought out elsewhere, by peasants, small landholders, farm-workers, indigenous populations," it could be posited (albeit schematically) that beyond the originary meta-theoretical proposition of a "world without the rural," or a "total urban world," planetary urbanization might be invested with an ancillary formulation attentive to the realities of the incipient mega-urbanization of the agrarian South. [47] In this co-evolutionary framework, rurality is not considered disappeared or dissolved but reconstituted in an infinite spectrum of mutable categories—"more than rural" or "less than urban," or "more or less rural" or "more or less urban"—an oscillating and fluctuating mediation between the urban and the *not*-urban, forgoing the possibility of neat dialectics.

[46] Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," 119.

[47] Brenner, "Theses on Urbanization," *Public Culture*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2013): 85–114.