

## **Apples and oranges: Inter-regional comparisons within India**

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### **Abstract:**

Spanning across six states, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) is an industrial megaproject of unprecedented scale in the Indian context. Planned to facilitate industrialization and urbanisation in the region between Delhi and Mumbai, it is significantly larger than any urban or industrial project undertaken so far in terms of its physical footprint. It aims to develop 24 new urban-like settlements along the corridor and therefore has significant implications for urban India, substantially changing the character of urbanisation in this region, and influencing future development trends in the country. It is also being largely planned and developed by private consultants in consultation with the Government of India, and the respective state governments.

The DMIC spans multiple jurisdictions, involves a wide range of stakeholders, and ranges across the domains of industrial, economic and urban planning. Studying a project of this nature was an opportunity for us to interrogate the nature of planning and governance between different levels of government and explore the relationship between state and non-state actors across different domains. Given that the DMIC is the first of several planned corridors in India, this study focused on the planning and governance arrangements for such a project, and the implications that this would have for other such infrastructure developments. A comparative case study approach lent itself naturally to the study of such a complex project, allowing us to examine multiple aspects of the corridor's development process while also grounding it spatially (Campbell, 2003).

Focusing on two states (Gujarat and Rajasthan) through which the majority of the DMIC passes, this study examined the relationships between national, state, and local governments and how power was being redistributed across different scales and levels of government. While studying the two states together offered

opportunities to understand how the project was being implemented across different scales and jurisdictions, and analyse the range of institutional and governmental frameworks that were being set up or modified to manage such a complex undertaking, this also posed analytical and empirical challenges, which are the focus of this paper.

While analyzing primary data on the comparative development of the DMIC in the two states, one of our chief difficulties was that of attributing the differences observed between states to currently observed factors versus an ability to understand the historical and political trajectories of each state that make it so. One of our main observations was the differential ability of the two state governments to negotiate with the central government, as well as the rate of implementation of DMIC-related projects. Our fieldwork provided some possible explanations for these, including the longer history of industrial institutions in Gujarat, Gujarat's legal framework governing land acquisition through town planning schemes and land pooling, and a more advanced industrial planning process at the state level. However, reviewing the literature, we found several other factors that we were unable to observe through our research such as the historical ability of political and bureaucratic elites in Gujarat to negotiate with the central government (Sinha, 2005).

Our other challenge was a methodological one – the problem of generalizing from the results of comparative case study research. We used this approach for our study, since it allowed us to best answer our research questions in the current context of the DMIC. It allowed us to incorporate the spatial and institutional complexity that surrounded the planning and development of the DMIC and develop a very rich understanding of the differences between the two states, as well as of the differing roles of a range of actors and institutional frameworks in Gujarat and Rajasthan in the development of the DMIC. However, the context of these two states is very specific, and we were challenged with extending our findings and insights beyond their immediate relevance to other similar processes in India and elsewhere.

Building on writing on generalizing from case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Ruddin, 2006; Campbell, 2003), our approach to generalization focused not on distilling our findings into a few observations that could be applied to other similar instances, but rather on engaging with the theoretical implications that emerged. Drawing on earlier work on state rescaling globally (Brenner, 2009a; Brenner, 2009b; Brenner, 2004), and in the Indian context (Kennedy, 2014), we used our work to understand how central and regional governments are rescaling and restructuring power and governmental authority in terms of governance and planning arrangements of mega-projects such as the DMIC (Anand and Sami, 2016). We found that mega-projects are emerging as spaces of exception (Ong, 2006) in economic as well as governance terms with a growing involvement of private actors, and constant negotiation between the central and state governments. We also found that more work needs to be done to understand the implications of projects like the DMIC, both historical research, especially at the sub-national scale, as well as on other similar projects as they evolve.

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