

# Periurban Narratives of Land Value: From Investments to Compensation

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This paper uses land values as the lens to examine contested land claims in periurban areas of Kolkata and Hyderabad, both capitals of their respective states and two of India's largest metropolises. It argues that land valuations in project financials for external investors, and valuations of land, computed as compensation for displaced populations, reveal simultaneous development- underdevelopment dynamics. In the periurban land transitions in the two cities, speculative valuations of land, associated with new aspirational projects of urban development and modernity, have been privileged over productive use- values of land, tied into current cycles of urban food production, waste management, ground water replenishment, and livelihoods of resident and migrant populations. Periurban expansions in both cities are associated with an emergent terrain of public- private negotiations, collaborations and contestations, in places made explicit through particular state projects of infrastructure- building, which are restructuring the geographies of current and prospective land values in the peripheries. New aspirational projects have exclusive access roads, connected directly to the cities' airports and captive water and power infrastructure. Meanwhile, irrigation and water management infrastructure, supporting periurban production and livelihoods have experienced attrition in policy interest.

The post- liberalization narratives of urban development in India's metros are dominated by the need to attract external investments. Urban peripheries have become a critical site for projects that aim to create a new external- facing 'global' urban identity. More specifically, the peripheries of state capitals, such as Kolkata and Hyderabad, have emerged as default locational options for state governments, trying to attract investments in the absence of comprehensively imagined state- level industrial and urban agendas. The paper's comparative frame is structured around the different political ideologies of the two state governments, who facilitated the economic transitions in the two cities. The economic transitions of Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, were shaped by a communist state government, who enjoyed the longest elected tenure in office, while the transitions in Hyderabad, the capital city of undivided Andhra Pradesh, were shaped by a pro- market government and a chief minister, who preferred to be known as the CEO of the state. The contestations over land values in periurban areas of the two cities reveal parallel trends, but emerge from distinctly different government approaches towards external investors.

The paper is based on 13 months of fieldwork in Kolkata and Hyderabad, involving interviews with government officials, displaced populations, civil society groups, real estate developers, brokers and real estate associations. The fieldwork is supplemented by secondary research into the historic transitions of urban development policies, institutions and public- private negotiations over land in the two cities.

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