



City without a migrant?

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Abstract: ‘City without a migrant’ is an oxymoron to imagine of a city in the entire world where there is not a single migrant who is residing within its boundaries. This paper attempts to contribute to the body of urban studies by looking into the relationship between migrants and city, analyzing the inclusive and exclusive perspectives and probing questions whether migrants have deteriorated the conditions of the cities or they have contributed (by extending their ‘cheap’ labour) in the vertical and horizontal expansion of the cities. The paper is divided into four sections. The first section looks into the relationship between cities and migrants from the inclusive and exclusive perspectives. The second section looks at the relationship between migrants and urbanization. The third section looks into the insider-outsider paradigm that is constructed to distinguish between the local and the migrants and how the migrants negotiate their identity in Guwahati, one of the largest urbanized cities in North-East India. The fourth section analyzes policies that are framed in the context of India for migrants and the way migrants are reflected in the policies. The paper is an attempt to show that flow of people and goods have existed since time immemorial. Though in recent times flow of people into the city cannot simply be summed up in terms of ‘push and pull’ but there are several factors at work like globalization, urbanization, industrialization, capacity to aspire and find a new way of life which leads to the migration of people to the cities. The paper tries to bring out the positive side of migration to the cities highlighting the stereotypes and labelling process which a migrant has to undergo to promote the urbanization of cities.

Key Terms: City | Urbanization | Migrants | Migration | Urban Sociology

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Introduction

Urban scholars have always been fascinated with the phenomenon of migration and though urbanism is not all about migration, migration constitutes a significant part of the field of urban studies. The title of the paper ‘city without a migrant’ is an oxymoron to imagine of a city¹ in the entire world where there is not a single migrant² who is residing within its boundaries. This paper attempts to contribute to the body of urban studies by looking into the relationship between the migrants and city, analyzing the inclusive and exclusive perspectives and probing questions whether migrants have deteriorated the conditions of the cities or they have contributed (by extending their ‘cheap’ labour) in the vertical and horizontal expansion of the cities.

¹ ‘City’ here refers to, as Thorns (2002) defines, as a social and political construction. City is, as Bakewell and Jonsson (2011) sees having their own distinct ways of life and functioning to which its inhabitants are tied to.

²By migrant I am only looking at those people who arrive at the place of destination i.e. cities of settlement through social networks that help them in their transition from one society to another (see Waldinger 2001: 10).

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The paper is an attempt to show that flow of people and goods have existed since time immemorial. Though in recent times flow of people into the city cannot simply be summed up in terms of ‘push and pull’ but there are several factors at work like globalization, urbanization, industrialization, capacity to aspire and find a new way of life which leads to the migration of people to the cities. The paper tries to bring out the positive side of migration to the cities highlighting the stereotypes and labelling process which a migrant has to undergo to promote the urbanization of cities. But prior to doing so

I would like to discuss the relationship between cities and migrants.

Cities and Migrants

The paper began with a utopian vision to think of a city without a migrant residing within its boundary. This exercise was done to show how important a migrant and his/her labour is for the development of a city. The importance of migrant labourers is felt during festivals (and elections in case of India esp. Assam) which causes a strain in urban services and upsets many urban residents lives who are depended on them as they provide services at cheap remuneration without any social security or occupational insurance. It would not be wrong to claim as Irena Maryniak (2006) aptly says "*cities are made of migrants*"- where cities are seen by migrants as land of opportunities, who are pushed from their homelands due to poverty, unemployment, slave trade, famine, drought, conflicts and war. In some cases migrants were pulled to cities due to improved standard of living, communication, rapid industrialization, establishment of new colonies and changes in national and international trade (Thorns 2002: 4). Older historiography and sociology has seen urban migration as a significant sign and the main vehicle of the ongoing modernization process which was pushing rural people out of primary sector in rural areas and pulling them into secondary and tertiary sectors in urban areas (Winter 2009:1). But how do we understand this relationship between cities and migrants? This relationship can be understood as a two-way relationship. First, how city views the migrants vis-a-vis non-migrants, whether as objects or subjects and second, since migrants are active agents and constantly negotiate their position, rights, identity and self within the city, how they view their relationship with the city.

City's relationship with migrant

The earliest writers on city such as Tonnies (1956) and Durkheim (1960) created typologies to bring in the contrast between rural and urban life, giving importance to former as a world that was lost and nostalgia of the rural life calling to revive it. They focussed much more on the relationship between migrants and their rural roots giving cursory attention to the relationship between city (the new home of migrants) and migrants. The city as a product of successive waves of migration was brought to light by the Chicago or Ecological School in the 1920's which was influenced by 'ecological analogies, Darwinian competitiveness and market economies' and changes that was brought due to domination, invasion and succession. Writh (1938) in his seminal essay on "*Urbanism as a way of Life*" brought to light that changes in the city were due to variation in size, density and heterogeneity of the city which affected the lives of the city inhabitants changing their social relations based on close proximity, face-to-face and informal to impersonal and formal in nature. In 1970's

the ecological school was criticized and the focus shifted to structural aspect of the city like power, political processes and economic determinants emphasising the agency of the migrants to migrate to city taking into account the various demographic characteristics like gender, ethnicity and the likes into account. In 1980's and 1990's the changes in the city's spatial and social structure due to interaction between the global and local shifted the focus to relationship between global cities and transnational migrants stressing on their everyday experience and negotiations in the urban space. We can see that in urban research and analysis there has been a shift away from grand narratives to the everyday experience by migrants which are shaped by the context and contingencies of urban development and change (Thorns 2002:8).

The paper analyses the relationship between city and migrant through three perspectives- inclusive, exclusive and global power. The inclusive and exclusive perspectives views the migrants as objects of development whose actions are structurally determined (Silvey & Lawson 1999:125) but they differ in the way they view the migrants as positive or negative objects.

The inclusive perspective draws from the welfarist and socialist perspective that looks after the well being of every individual within its boundary- be it local or non-local resident of a city and looks at the positive aspect of migrating to cities. Modernization perspectives views migrants as rationally calculating individuals who economically benefit from migration and the decision to migrate are undertaken voluntarily as a function of temporary regional disparities in economic development. These perspectives view migrants as "agents of modernization" whose behaviour is determined largely by economic factors (Silvey & Lawson 1999:126). Migrant's remittances are seen as the best resort for the development of people in the place of origin. Doug Saunders (2010) in his book 'Arrival City' brings out the positive effects of migration where he says rural peasants learn the lesson of having fewer children and getting them educated to enable them to have a good life. He says migrants are required by the cities for providing service to the urbanities in terms of skills, youth and energy to work. City as a melting pot welcomes the diversity of migrant communities as can be seen as in mushrooming of variety of restaurants, market places and community organizations. Pro-scholars of migration to cities have found that increase in urbanization leads to increase in per-capita income and other economic measures as rural-to-urban migrants move from primary to secondary or tertiary sector improving productivity as well as income. They also claim that urbanization provides 'cost-reduction advantages of agglomeration economies and economies of scale' (Beauchemin and Bocquier 2003:6). Apart from the direct advantages of migrating to cities, there are certain indirect advantages

which have been mentioned by Doug Saunders (2010) like education of children, improvement in health care, lower levels of fertility and mortality.

The exclusive perspective looks at a migrant as the cause of social evil and the reason of deterioration of the city's aesthetics and focuses on the negative aspects of migration. Migration to the cities has led to abnormal growth of urban population. Migrants were seen as victims of rural uprooting, unemployment, overcrowding and degeneration which are an outcome of unprecedented growth in urban population (Winter 2009:1). Political-economy perspectives views migrants from peripheral countries and regions as the victims rather than the ultimate beneficiaries of development (Silvey & Lawson 1999:126). Migrants are seen as source of disruption, deterioration of community, who are not readily accepted as a citizen which is evident from an examination of public policies which restrict and control migration by issuing temporary or guest work permits and make it difficult for migrants in accessing residency or citizenship. By the beginning of 21st century, state narratives and citizenship regimes stressed the distinctiveness and exclusivity of national identities which were based on cultural difference to make distinction between migrants and natives (Schiller 2009:13).

Unlike the other two perspectives, the global power perspectives neither demonize migrants nor celebrate them and it is bounded by borders of nation-states. This perspective rather than debating whether migration to cities is good or bad, sees migration as a part of broader transnational processes within which various nation-states are enmeshed and to which they contribute. It views that if migrant scholars keep aside their 'methodological nationalism'³ they can contribute to the growth of social theories that is an intersection of global, national and local and embrace methodological cosmopolitanism. This perspective views the divide between the migrant and native as a prime challenge for social cohesion, stability and welfare of states in which migrants settle. It places the migrants in spaces, where they live and are connected by 'transnational social field'⁴ as well as contributing to daily fabric of urban life and transnational processes. Migrants are seen as actors, who connect the local people to the global processes (Schiller 2009; Schiller 2012).

Migrant's relationship with the city

³ 'Methodological Nationalism' is coined by Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller to critique the tendency of migrant scholars to conflate nation-state with a concept of society (Schiller 2009).

⁴ Transnational social fields' are 'a network of networks of social relationships' (Basch et al. 1994; Schiller 2012) .

The inclusive, exclusive and global power perspectives discussed above portrayed migrants as passive objects, missing the element of agency of migrants in its theorization which is picked up by Feminists, Post-Structural and Cultural Geography perspectives. These perspectives views migrants as interpretive subjects, who migrate due to their own choice rather than economic choice which are driven by broader structural forces. Migrants participate in dialogue with various discourses of modernization and development, rather than as subjects whose activities are determined by macro-structural processes (Silvey & Lawson 1999:124). Their movement to cities can be seen as a process of negotiation and reinvention of their self, identities and subject positions which not only shape their mobility decisions and their experiences in the place of destination (Cant 1997; Silvey & Lawson 1999) but also shape urban areas and contribute to the growth and development of urban economy. In spite of exclusionary practices migrants eventually become part of the mainstream (see Lucassen & Penninx 1997).

Apart from these two perspectives, the relationship between cities and migrants can also be viewed from the lens of the process of urbanization, industrialisation, globalization and modernization (and economic development). In the next section I will discuss the relationship between migrants and urbanization.

Migrants and Urbanization

Davis (1955:429) said the history of development of cities in the world dates back to 4000 B.C. But 'urbanised societies' where a large population of people live in the cities are recent developments dating back to nineteenth and twentieth century. He said that urbanization in the entire world is speeding up since 1800 and it is difficult to decide when urbanization reaches its peak. Cities are said to be the engines of economic growth and this engines keep running primarily at the cost of cheap labour provided by migrants to the cities. Due to process of globalisation, industrialisation, modernisation world is steadily becoming more urban. According to a UNFPA report, 74 % of Latin American and Caribbean populations live in urban areas, as do 73% of people in Europe and more than 75% of people in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. In both Africa and Asia, urban dwellers represent about a third of the total populations. However, there are significant variations between individual countries (UNFPA, 1999). In India, urban⁵

⁵ According to Census in India, urban area is identified were minimum of 75percent of its population are engaged in non-agricultural occupation. In contrast to which in China, if 10 percent of the urban population are engaged in non-agricultural occupations it is termed as 'urban'. Acknowledging the differences in definition of urban in different countries, Cohen (2004) said if India revises the

population has increased from 11% in 1901 to 29% in 2001. According to a government report, the urban population is expected to shoot up to 40% of total population by 2021 (Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation and Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India 2005) (Sridhar, Reddy and Srinath 2013:1). The rapid population growth in the cities is attributed to migration of people who move evaluating the advantages of living in the cities and the attractive aura that the cities project. But as the cities mushroom in size social inequalities, urban poverty and development of slums intensify correspondingly. Migration to cities in developed and developing countries are 'linked to stagnation and volatility of agriculture without sectoral diversification within agrarian economy' (Kundu 2007:1). Urbanization in developing countries has to overcome economic, environmental and social challenges. Most of the unskilled or poor people (mostly migrants) find work in the informal sector which is economic challenge of urbanization in developing countries as this sector is untaxed and unregulated. Overcrowding, congestion, unsafe drinking water, housing problems, sanitation and over development are few of the environmental challenges. One of the examples of environmental pollution that comes to mind is of Mexico City. It is said that the pollution level in Mexico City is so high that one day in the city is equivalent to smoking 40 cigarettes a day. Due to high rate of migration to cities certain social services like family planning advice, health care, education and training cannot be delivered adequately to all the members of city (Giddens 2009:233-4).

Addressing the challenges to urbanization faced by developing countries like India will guide its future course of change and development. Urbanization in India dates back to pre-historic times (2350 B.C. to 1800 B.C.) (Ramachandran 1991) but the European phase of urbanization in India is linked with colonization which led to development of new centres to control and administer the colonized population as well as exploit and extract natural resources which were raw materials supplied to run the factories in Britain. Labour migration was a significant factor of urban development in colonial times and it continued even after independence. It becomes interesting to understand the relationship between migrants and city in post-independent India which will give us insight not only to process of migration but also urbanization in India. For this exercise I take Guwahati city, one of the major cities in North-East India, a gateway city to six states (Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura) in North-East India and one of the largest urbanized cities in the region. I try to understand how the migrants experience the urban milieu and how

definition of urban than a majority of India will be urban (Sridhar, Reddy and Srinath 2013).

are they received by the native population of the city. Data on migrants in Guwahati is an excerpt of my doctoral research on "Negotiating Citizenship: A Study of Bengali Muslim Women Migrants in Guwahati" collected through feminist ethnography carried over a period of almost five years from July 2011 to April 2016.

Migrants in Guwahati City

Guwahati as a city offers the new migrants a new way of life, which can be observed in their way of dressing, entertainment after work, food habits, migrant's outlook towards religion and in case of women the way they decorate their new home, their identity and shape their worldview. For migrant women workers in the workplace it is difficult to maintain purdah or physical distance from fellow male workers. Mobile phones act as device for entertainment, social networking, finding new jobs and a connection with their rural roots. Male migrant workers sometimes indulge in going to the theatre/cinema or socializing through drinking alcohol, sharing tobacco or gutka, smoking bidis, playing cards or carom. Women migrant workers visit their fictive relatives or friends, chat with the neighbourhood women, make and share new recipes with them. Guwahati offers the migrant workers new street food to tickle their taste buds which is cheap, tasty and satisfying like momo, variety of chats, 'chowmein' (fried noodles) and so on. The urban lifestyle and work ethics makes the observance of religious rituals and offerings flexible. Women migrant workers develop a new hobby of decorating their new home. Sometimes due to their erratic work timings they may not be able to maintain the décor of their homes but during festivals or prayer meetings they ensure that their homes are maintained well and decorated to their likes. The new urban environment also shapes their self-identity enabling them to interact with different people, fighting for their daily existence and developing their worldview which is shaped by their social network, media and their interaction in the workplace.

I found that women workers are preferred in the unorganized sector thanks to globalization, Structural Adjustment Programs which viewed women as cheap and docile labourers (Bhattacharya 2007; Shah et. al 1999). Women migrant workers are employed as unskilled labourers in the unorganized sector. They are paid unequal wages in comparison to their male counterparts and their earnings are insecure. They are not represented in the labour unions in Guwahati and even if they are, their voices are not heard. They do not get any holidays and they have prolonged working hours. They do not complain because if they do they would not be employed and the women migrant workers who are the sole breadwinners of their families cannot afford that their child/children do not get their daily meals. They have to go to work even when they are sick otherwise their family has to sleep without a meal or two. They

have their double burden of work and they take their work as they are destined to do so. They do not question the taken for granted assumptions regarding housework. Some of the female breadwinners who are separated, widowed or deserted share their housework with their daughter(s) and son(s). They share their pain by talking to their fellow women workers or the neighbourhood women.

Kumar (2011) says migrants are sometimes labeled as 'unreliable outsiders' or criminals by local people. In Guwahati, I found, some local people discriminate and label (Bengali Muslim) migrant workers as 'Bangladeshis'. They develop stereotypes for these migrant workers who would do menial jobs during daytime and locate houses to rob at night.

Zoya Akhtar, a 52 year old Muslim Assamese lady who resides alone (as her husband who is an engineer employed in a different district) was robbed by four men who threaten to kill her if she shouted. After they left she called the police that the four men were 'Bangladeshis' and she could say so as they were conversing in a Bengali dialect which is spoken in the bordering areas of Assam and in Bangladesh. She alleged that her new part-time maid was involved in the crime and gave the details to the four dacoits.

The part-time women workers are viewed with suspicion and the lady of the house monitors her actions as she does her routine work. Apart from the discrimination, the women migrants become victims of stereotypes which hinder them in accessing their rights as citizens of India. As their voter identity card or ration card belongs to their native place of residence they cannot access the benefits in the city. Local politicians during the campaigning of elections promise them they would help them in getting the social welfare benefits like BPL, APL, Ration cards and welfare benefits but once they win the election they forget about this vulnerable section in the city. Migrants in Guwahati do face exclusionary practices through stereotyping and labeling process initiated by the native residents (or older migrants of cities) to claim their superiority and their rights over the city. But migrants try to assimilate with the mainstream by developing city based social networks, imitating the life style of city dwellers and coping with the urban demands.

Policies, programmes and schemes for migrants in India

Each nation-state has its own programmes and policies to address the issue of migration and challenges it brings in process of urbanization. International bodies provide recommendations to address this issue which the

countries can incorporate in their programmes and policies to overcome the challenges of urbanization posed by migration. In this section, I focus on city's relationship with migrants in India as reflected in the various state and regional policies shaped by the colonial past and the local histories.

Migration to cities has led to growth of slums and a growth of migrants are more compared to native urban population. United Nations has projected that rapid migration and urbanization will triple the population of slums till 2050. A review of evolution of policies of urban development in India suggest that until the Sixth Plan (1980-85) the focus has been on alleviation of slums by providing housing facilities and civic amenities to slum dwellers but there was an absence of master plan at national level. The Seventh Plan highlighted the problems of urban poor but substantive efforts of poverty reduction and employment generation with active support from local bodies was taken up in the Eight Plan and carried forward till Ninth Plan. In the Tenth plan the benefits of urban development like Urban Water Supply Programme, Mega City scheme and National Capital Region Plan were reaped primarily by metropolitan cities and class I cities. Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojna was revitalized during the Tenth Plan period to provide livelihood (by forming Self Help Groups (SHGs) which would function to create assets and develop skills) to urban poor but problems emerged at the level of implementation and identification of beneficiaries of the scheme. Sanitation programme was also designed to provide clean environment to urban poor but only few states opted for this programme and very few cities and towns in India are covered under this programme. The Eleventh Plan launched the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, which targeted to develop the deteriorating infrastructural situations of the cities and Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme, which aimed at bringing balanced urbanization in the country.

Inter-state and inter-district migrants lose their entitlements which they can avail in their home state or district when they cross the border of their state or district. For example: migrants who have been availing rice or wheat, salt, sugar, *dal* (lentils) and kerosene at subsidized price through Public Distribution System (PDS) in Assam cannot avail it in Delhi. So, they have to depend on open market where prices keep fluctuating and in turn end up paying more than the local people. Although Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, an initiative by government of India to provide free education up to 14 years of age is implemented (in papers) in all the states in India, children of migrants seldom avail this facility as they are left back in the villages or they are unable to attend school due to language barriers (Kumar 2011). Apart from these, there are certain legal provisions to protect the rights of inter-state migrants. One such act is

Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act (1979) which ensures equality of wages between migrant and non-migrant workers, displacement allowance equivalent to half month wages, travel allowance (i.e. from place of residence to place of work), prescribed medical facilities to migrants at free of cost, suitable residential accommodation and working conditions are to be provided by the contractor. This act is applicable to establishments and contractors, when they employ five or more inter-state migrant workers. The legal provisions that are available to local workers are also applicable to migrant workers like Minimum Wages Act, Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, Payment of Wages Act, Factories Act and so on.

In spite of the existing legal protection to migrants in India, empirical research shows that there is violation of these laws in different states in India. An analysis of the above policies, programmes and schemes suggest that it targeted the housing, providing water facility, livelihood opportunities and sanitation facility to urban poor, a sizeable proportion of which is constituted by migrant population. The implementation of the Government programmes are not reaped or do not reach out to urban poor as most of the cities and towns are not covered by it. Bose (2013) says that the policies of government of India show that it discourages migration into cities without improving the living conditions of the rural people. Kundu (2007:23) suggests that involvement of public agencies like Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), CBOs and local bodies that can help in implementing and monitoring of different governmental benefits ensuring it reaches out to all section of urban population residing in cities and towns of varied sizes. He also suggests that existing staffs, involved in providing the various government benefits, should be trained to disseminate the benefits to people and technical staffs should be strengthened for better management. He says that in order to decelerate migration to developed states and cities, towns should generate non-agricultural employment and diversify its economic base which will contribute to balanced development of the country as well as provide better linkages with the hinterlands by providing infrastructural needs and absorbing migrant population. I agree with the suggestions that Kundu makes to minimize the problems and challenges that arise due to large-scale migration to developed states and cities and suggest that government's concern should not only be focussed in the stage of formulation of policies, programmes and schemes but also its efficient and effective implementation through various agencies who monitor that benefits reach every people and not limited to certain pockets.

Conclusion

The paper began with a utopian vision of 'city without a migrant', an exercise done to express the importance of migrants to the growth and development of cities. The aim of this paper is not to bring out the pros and cons of migration to cities but how the relationship between cities and migrants and vice-a-versa has been understood in the Urban and Migration Studies through various perspectives. I believe like Schiller (2009, 2012) that migrant scholars should shed their baggage of 'methodological nationalism' as it is a hindrance to the growth of social theories on migration which is a result of intersection between (global) national, regional and local and embracing 'methodological cosmopolitanism' which would help us to understand relationship between cities and migrants or vice-a-versa minus the anti-migrant nationalist bias. No one can deny the direct correlation between migration and urbanization. Acknowledging this correlation, 80% of developing countries, according to a UN report (United Nations 1998), have initiated policies to decelerate migration from rural to urban areas. Beauchemin and Bocquier (2003:4) says that such policies project(s) migrants as unwanted urban surplus labour contributing to development of squatter settlements and uncontrollable expansion of urban areas neglecting the positive contribution of migrants to cities. An analysis of policies, programmes and schemes in India showed similar projection of 'migrants as objects' or as passive beings by policymakers (Buttimer 1985) and economic, social, political and cultural problems which arise due to migration cannot be sorted out unless '*migrants are understood as subjects*' or actors contributing to daily fabric of urban life and to the process of urbanization, industrialization, modernization and globalization.

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