Localizing the Production of Global Cities: A Comparison of New Town Developments Around Shanghai and Kolkata

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This article investigates the role played by the state in the production and management of urban space vis-à-vis global agents of change. The proliferation of new towns and special economic zones as urban restructuring strategies in rapidly developing countries like China and India are receiving much attention from the scholarly community, documenting and interrogating urban transitions from centralized planning to more participatory and often privatized modes of decentralized planning. This article seeks to tease out the kinds of relationships between the state and other urban development actors it entails, ranging from conflict to collaboration, from protest to partnerships, and from contestation to collaboration. In the Shanghai Metropolitan context, we focus on Anting New Town and Songjiang New City as two cases for understanding the relative power of the municipal government, global capital, professional planning, and the limited influence of local residents in the process and outcome of large-scale suburban development. As a comparison, we focus on the West Bengal State government’s role in the development of two new townships (Rajarhat New Town and the Kolkata West International City) on the fringes of the existing core city of Kolkata (Calcutta), India. Drawing on a number of secondary sources such as development plans, newspaper articles, field-based observations, and informal discussions and interviews with official town planners, architects, and private planners, our goal is to compare and contrast the two strategies foregrounding the practices and the relationship of the state to the forces of privatization and globalization, to local grassroots actors and the precarious as well as multifarious ways in which it seeks to constantly negotiate with the dynamics of development. It seeks to answer: what kind of challenges does the state face in reorganizing the urban? Who are the other actors involved in the negotiations and exclusions, contestations, and collaborations? What are the new sociospatial, economic, and political boundaries and contents of the spaces produced?

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INTRODUCTION

If the different regulatory frameworks make housing rights in Shanghai and Mumbai vary (Weinstein and Ren, this issue), we expect institutional roles to matter to other salient aspects of urban development in Chinese and Indian megacities. This article investigates the emergent institutional linkages and differential roles played by the local, state, and municipal government institutions in the production and management of new urban townships around Shanghai, China, and Kolkata, India. We argue that existing as well as emerging institutional linkages and forms of urban local governance play a mediating role in moderating, adapting, and reinforcing the impacts of globalization in cities, leading to localized and particularized forms of globalization as it touches down (Abu-Lughod, 1999; Swyngedouw, 1997) and changes the urban landscape.

The global restructuring of political economies (and its uneven geographic pattern) has reconstituted the urban as a crucial and strategic site for the unfolding of global and national scale projects (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Roy, 2002, 2005; Sassen, 2006). The proliferation of new towns and special economic zones as distinct forms of urban restructuring strategies in rapidly developing countries like China and India has attracted attention from scholars keen on understanding the sociospatial dimensions of such transformations. Scholars of globalization argue that the nature of governance and its territorial reach is being challenged and shrunk, “hollowed out” (Brenner, 1999), or denationalized (Sassen, 2006). However, this article argues that the planning and production of new towns is shaped locally and under specific contingent circumstances by existing government institutions in conjunction or in competition with a range of emerging development actors across global, transnational, and local scales. The article seeks to highlight and compare some of the multiple kinds of relationships being forged between the government (local/regional) and other urban development actors, ranging from conflict to cooperation, from protest to partnerships, and from contestation to collaboration to redefine urban development.

We focus on Anting New Town and Songjiang New City near the central city of Shanghai as two cases for understanding the relative power of the municipal government, district government, global capital, professional planning, and the limited influence of local residents in the process and outcome of large-scale suburban development. For comparison, we have selected Rajarhat New Township and the Kolkata West International City, two new townships on the fringes of the existing core city of Kolkata, in West Bengal State, India. Here we examine the state government’s role vis-à-vis its developmental and housing departments, local urban bodies, and other quasi agencies developing such townships and the increasing politicization surrounding land use transformation from agriculture to urban. Secondary sources such as development plans and newspaper articles are supplemented by field-based observations and informal discussions and interviews with official town planners, architects, and private planners from Shanghai and Kolkata metropolitan areas.

In this article, we address three specific questions: (1) What are the relative roles of the local and regional governments in building new townships and in what ways do they influence the process as well as outcomes? (2) Who are the other developmental actors involved in the new township development projects and what kind of institutional arrangements do they enter into with the local urban governance bodies? (3) In what ways do these varied forms of institutional arrangements differ in the production of new
LOCALIZING THE PRODUCTION OF GLOBAL CITIES

towns? In the following section, we critique the “global city” paradigm that is central to
the global urbanization process. Drawing attention to the new spatial analytical focus in
understanding urbanization in the global South, we call for a more situated, comparative,
and analytical approach that gives equal importance to global forces and local conditions
that interact to produce new institutional frameworks and are moderated by existing-in-
stitutional actors in rapidly changing urban contexts.

BEYOND THE GLOBAL CITY PARADIGM

Contemporary urban theory is rooted in a predominantly Western developed country
context with democratic and liberal ideals and is therefore limited in its use for under-
standing the rapid pace, scale, and complexity of urbanization in other parts of the globe,
notably India and China. These existing theories or models of urban development and its
relation to globalization espouse a certain physical structure, political-economic frame-
work, and sociocultural milieu for emerging “world cities.” The predominant “global city”
approach treats the space of the urban as a given in which different global flows of capital,
people, information, ideas, services, goods, and information come together and reconfig-
ure the space of the local. Cities of the global South are seen to lag behind in the process
of convergence around this model of urban development creating a false dualism be-
tween the so-called First- and Third-World cities (Robinson, 2002, 2003). These models
tend to focus on global actors as the change agents with relatively little attention to local
or translocal actors and preexisting conditions.

When urban theory is reoriented toward a more nuanced approach of understanding
the role played by local urban politics and governmental actors in the process of urban
development, such as in the regime theory approach—it neglects the complex interac-
tions between global, regional, local, and translocal actors (Lauria, 1996). Regime theory
therefore posits that local factors dominate the policymaking, and globalization is just an
alias of the local interests of the progrowth coalition. Or else, some theories posit that
urban redevelopment is simply a local response of a governing regime to globalization
(Fainstein, 2001; Gibson, 2004). Moreover, the regime theory approach has been used in
a handful of cases outside the Western liberal democratic, late capitalist developed cities
and therefore, may not be suitable for our current comparative study of urban develop-
ment in rapidly industrializing countries with megacities.

In the latter context, however, existing local urban development actors, particularly
government institutions, have been considered secondary to private capital and elite in-
terest groups, and are variously portrayed as powerless and neutral mediators, facilitators,
or enablers of new forms of urban development in the face of revalorization of the urban
in a globalizing world. This more competitive environment pressures local governmental
actors to take on a new approach, shifting from political control to market guidance and
acting from a local sovereign to an entrepreneurial actor (Orum and Chen, 2003). It is
crucial to assess the shifting role of the local state as it becomes more entangled with
other global and local actors in urban (re)development.

NEW TOWN DEVELOPMENT AS LOCAL PRODUCTION OF GLOBAL CITY REGIONS

Despite the theoretical and empirical limitations, the discourse and rhetoric of the
“global city” has found a strong foothold in the urban areas of the global South and
is instrumental (through urban planning and policy) in remaking the urban in the image of global cities (Mahadevia, 2008). Many local, regional, and city-level governments in the developing world are creating new urban spaces through the production of new integrated townships, on the fringes of existing large urban centers, as another common form of globalizing the local. These supposedly self-sufficient new towns dotting the reconstituted urban landscape manifest the current urban development strategies of attracting capital investment. Images of such new towns show very little difference in the actual built environment of these cities that are marked by gated high-rise developments, expensive shopping malls and entertainment complexes, convention centers, high-tech business and institutional districts, and state-of-the-art infrastructure such as roads, dedicated power lines, and water supply, which set them apart from the existing, older larger urban centers.

We see the building of new townships as local production of global cities that triggers the question of how the local government/state localizes globalization in a subtle and indirect way through creating and influencing quasigovernment agency to manage planning and development of new townships as mega-projects. This question takes on more salience as what constitutes urban is being radically reorganized and reconstituted. Some urban scholars (Scott et al., 2001; Soja and Kanai, 2007) now claim that a more appropriate scale of study is the “metropolitan region,” or the “city region” scale or even the “megacity” scale, all of which extend physically, economically, politically, and socioculturally beyond the confines of the traditional “city” with a singular central business district. The focus on new townships in Shanghai and India allows us to evaluate how they may differ from the more known and problematic periurban phenomena in and around large developing country cities—the so-called “pariah edge . . . those strange limbos where ruralized cities transition into urbanized countrysides” (Davis, 2006, pp. 45–46).

In planning principle and reality, the new townships are a departure from the new towns built prior to China’s and India’s large-scale economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. Previous new townships were largely state-sponsored developments to support industrialization in far-flung areas and targeted no particular income group as its residents. The new townships being built on the peripheries of existing cities are being financed through private developers—local, national, and international—while the acquisition and development of large tracts of land continues to be a state-regulated process bringing in new social and economic contestations. However much they may appear similar in terms of land use plans and the built environment, we argue that complex social relations and actions by different sets of institutional actors are in play in the actual production of these new towns as part of China’s and India’s continued buildup of their key megacities.

A TWO-TIERED COMPARISON

The basic question motivating our comparison is whether the concept plans differ for the planning and development of new towns in Shanghai and Kolkata? The next important comparative focus is whether there is any difference between these developments with regard to who are they being built for, why are they being built, and where are they being located.

We contend that the process of new town development in Shanghai and Kolkata is highly contested. The development of urban fringes is contested by multiple stakeholders
and interest groups engaged in the process and these groups are increasingly excluded from such developments. They have increasingly divergent preferences for such development plans that may compete, coexist, or conflict with each other. These emergent and evolving institutional relationships influence the process as well as outcome of urban development, producing not a singular typical form of “global city” but multiple forms of new urban living spaces. This is what we seek to illuminate through our comparison of four case studies of new town development at two scales: the differences and similarities between Shanghai and Kolkata in the respective national contexts, and the differences and similarities between a pair of cases (the new towns) near Shanghai and Kolkata.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA VS. INDIA

Urbanization in China began to accelerate in the 1980s, through the 1990s, and into the new century. In China geographically, the most rapidly developing cities are located along the coast. With better facilities, infrastructure, and labor pool, large coastal cities became more appealing to international investors, with megacities like Shanghai being the most attractive locations for hosting large multinational companies and real estate developers. As Shanghai became more crowded and costly for international and domestic investors, it began to move manufacturing plants from their downtown areas to industry parks at city peripheries, to demolish dilapidated neighborhoods for redevelopment, and to construct skyscrapers and high-end amenities (Chen, 2007a). Sociospatial segregation became more distinctive as office towers, gated communities, and urban amenities were constructed, while the urban poor were relocated to the periphery areas where supposedly more affordable housing was constructed for original local residents but with poorer quality transport infrastructure and other facilities than the central city.

Conflicts have occurred in the demolition and displacement process. The emergence of civil society in China’s cities began to challenge the authority of city governments in adopting more lenient policies and consequently incurring higher costs in urban redevelopment. Nevertheless, the pressure of population density and real estate development keeps pushing megacities like Shanghai to expand outward or horizontally. Suburban areas, which have been underdeveloped, became the logical and adjacent foci or destinations in the new round of urban development after around 2000 (Chen, 2007b).

Post economic liberalization and reform in 1991, Indian cities have been at the center of massive socioeconomic, political, and governance-related changes. Freeing the market from the state’s regulative framework in order to facilitate private investment in urban infrastructure and the empowerment of governments at the local level are central components of an emerging urban strategy in India. Despite only one-third of its total population being urban, India’s cities contribute over 55 percent to country’s GDP and urbanization has been recognized as an important component of economic growth (India Urban Poverty Report, 2009).

The acceleration of economic growth in the past two decades is closely related to urban growth, particularly in the fringes of existing megacities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Bangalore. There has been a national policy directive to build and promote the growth of 100 new towns of one million target population by the year 2020 to ease the increasing pressure of urbanization in larger metropolitan centers. The emergence of large metropolitan areas or urban agglomerations is perhaps one of the defining features of contemporary urbanization in India. Growth rate of bigger cities has been higher than
the small and medium towns. With decentralization of governance, cash strapped municipal corporations compete with each other for resources, particularly over foreign direct investment. To draw investment into the city through real-estate-driven development, city governments have been relaxing norms relating to urban land use, zoning, land ceiling, etc. Public-private partnerships have been actively promoted to produce housing stock and other urban infrastructure and services.

The spatial and social character of megacities is rapidly changing with deindustrialization and loss of manufacturing plants and the concurrent expansion of the “sunrise” industry or the information technology sector and its enabled services (Shaw, 2007). In the metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata, many mills and erstwhile industries have shut down or have been relocated away from the city to its periphery, freeing up prime land for real estate development. This has resulted in an urban landscape dotted with high rises, towers and high-end malls, and entertainment complexes, similar to what has happened in Chinese megacities like Shanghai.

Therefore, the transition that urban centers are undergoing on all fronts—social, spatial, economic, demographic, and cultural—leads Shaw (2007) to suggest that urbanization in India is a complex process and is creating new and different spaces, identities, and images. In the following section, we briefly introduce the four new townships and locate them within their respective metropolitan contexts—i.e., Shanghai and Kolkata—to understand the urbanization process driving such development (see Table 1).

A PROFILE OF FOUR CASES

SHANGHAI METROPOLITAN AREA

Shanghai is the largest metropolis in China in terms of its total population and population density. Spread over 6,340 square kilometers, Shanghai in 2007 hosted 18.6 million people including a difficult-to-estimate number of migrant workers or the so-called floating population. The density of permanent population of Shanghai municipality is over 2,000 per square kilometer, while the downtown area defined by the internal highway circle (neihuan) is more than 40,000 per square kilometer (see Chen, introduction to this special issue, for a slightly different indicator). The projected population for Shanghai in 2010 is about 19 million and could easily top 20 million shortly thereafter. Without the intervention and guidance of the state, most of the increase will still be concentrated in the central city of Shanghai.

Shanghai municipality, broadly bounded like a Shanghai metropolitan region, administers 18 urban and suburban districts (some of the latter used to be agricultural counties) plus one county as the second-level administrative unit. The basic idea for the “One City Nine Towns” plan, which involves Anting and Sonjiang (see below), is to accelerate the urbanization of suburban Shanghai, to decentralize the population density of the central city, and to generate broader regional economic development impulses.

In the Shanghai Master Plan (1999–2020), the population of 9.15 million in the central city according to the 2000 census is planned to decrease to eight million by 2020. Municipal government decides to relocate more than 1.15 million people to the suburbs. To attract the population in the central city of Shanghai to the suburbs is not easy. Former Mayor Liangyu Chen initiated the suburban development in 2000, remarking that “The suburbs of Shanghai lack characteristics and do not look as nice and colorful as its urban
### TABLE 1. Basic Characteristics of the Four Cities (Cases) under Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of New Towns</th>
<th>Shanghai International Automobile City</th>
<th>Songjiang New City</th>
<th>Rajarhat New Town Kolkata</th>
<th>Kolkata West International City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location with respect to existing city center</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>North Eastern fringe of Kolkata Metropolitan Area</td>
<td>North West but within Kolkata Metropolitan Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to downtown</td>
<td>32 KM</td>
<td>40 KM</td>
<td>10 KM</td>
<td>9 KM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned area</td>
<td>68 KM²</td>
<td>36 KM²</td>
<td>30.75 KM²</td>
<td>1.58 KM²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned population</td>
<td>80,000 for Anting New Town</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>1 million residential and 5 lakh floating population</td>
<td>36,000 residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local administration</td>
<td>Jiading district</td>
<td>Songjiang district</td>
<td>Rajarhat, Bhangor, Gopalpur municipalities in North and South 24 Paraganas districts of West Bengal</td>
<td>Howrah district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City-regional administration</td>
<td>Shanghai municipal government</td>
<td>Government of West Bengal through housing board, recently notified as new town planning area under W.B. Town and Country Planning Act</td>
<td>Kolkata metropolitan development authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan area</td>
<td>6,340 KM²</td>
<td>1,854 KM²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Shanghai area</td>
<td>620 KM²</td>
<td>187.33 KM²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Shanghai population</td>
<td>9.15 million (2000 Census)</td>
<td>4.85 million (2001 census) and 6 million floating population daily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¹This figure included 13.59 million resident population and 4.99 million population staying as Shanghai longer than half the year. Source: Shanghai Statistics Bureau (2008).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The concept of “One City Nine Towns” was announced in the Act titled “About Pioneer Projects of Promoting Urban Development in Suburbs of Shanghai Metropolitan Area” in 2001 (see Figure 1). The economic plan titled the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006–2010) of Shanghai proposed an urban hierarchical system with an emphasis on new town development. A total of 140 small towns in the suburban area of Shanghai were proposed by their district governments to become one part of the new towns plan. The competition to become a New Town was actually a contest among townships for mega-projects such as university districts and foreign manufacturing plants.

Because these 10 locations (One City Nine Towns) have been a host of certain international firms or aimed to attract new global companies, the new towns are required to meet the demand of the targeted market, with special design features. A duplication of the Western building type and landscape becomes a strategy to attract both foreigners working in the firms and Chinese people who cherish the Western life style who are usually living in the downtown area. The 10 new towns were designated to follow certain places in nine foreign countries including the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Sweden, the United States, France, Spain, Australia, and Netherlands, with only one of them being restored as a traditional Chinese water town. The physical building type and landscape...
would imitate the living condition and life style of the developed countries. The connection of the new towns in Shanghai to globalization thereby was established not only as economic production sites, but also as social and cultural domains where local governments and residents encounter and interact with global symbols and identities.

Shanghai International Automobile City in Anting

Shanghai International Automobile City (SIAC) is one of the 10 projects of the “One City Nine Towns” plan initiated by the municipal government of Shanghai in 2000. The joint venture—Shanghai Volkswagen Co. Ltd—was established in 1985 at a small town in Jiading District named Anting about 30 kilometers away from central Shanghai (see Figure 1). In 1998, Jiading district government developed Shanghai Volkswagen Industrial Park to host manufacturing plants of automobile parts and accessories. In September 2000, two townships—Anting and Fangtai—were merged under the administration of SIAC with a total administrative area of about 68 square kilometers. Based on the well-established automobile manufacturing industry, SIAC was designed for more comprehensive automobile-related sectors. The functional areas include automobile trade, production, exhibition, education, management, and entertainment, as well as a Formula 1 racetrack (which occupies 5.3 square kilometers) and a complete new settlement called Anting New Town for 50,000 residents covering about 5.4 square kilometers. Major facilities including the Formula 1 racetrack and the first phase of Anting New Town had been built by 2004.
Songjiang New City

Songjiang New City is one of the 10 new towns focusing on the university district and real estate development. Located on the north of the historic old town of Songjiang (see Figure 1), the New City was planned to mitigate the redevelopment pressure in the old town as well as in the central city of Shanghai. The first phase of Songjiang New City with an area of 22 square kilometers comprises a cross-shaped green space in the center, a university district, and a train station in the north (300 hectares), Songjiang cultural and administrative center in the south (36 hectares), a high-end residential district in the west, and a large ecopark in the east. Commercial facilities, schools, hospitals, and hotels are planned around the central green belt. Campuses for seven universities are developed in the university district for about 60,000 students and 20,000 faculty and staff. The high-end residential project named Thames Town (100 hectares) provides England (Tudor)-style single-family houses, town houses, and street life. Started in 2002, Thames Town’s basic construction was finished in 2006.

KOLKATA METROPOLITAN AREA AND ITS FRINGES

Kolkata is the oldest and the third largest metropolis in India after Mumbai and Delhi. Located in the state of West Bengal, it now extends over 1,854 square kilometers stretching on either banks of the river Hooghly with a population of more than 15 million in 2005. The Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA) comprises three municipal corporations, several small- to medium-sized municipalities, many small- and medium-sized cities, and numerous towns and villages. However, the core area of the city, on the eastern bank of the river, also known as the Kolkata Municipal Corporation area, is about 184 square kilometers and holds a population of 4.85 million people. The projected population for 2025 for KMA is 21 million people, and most of the increase will take place in the outer areas of the metropolitan area as growth within the core areas has been almost stagnant in the past decade.

As the Capital of the British Empire, Kolkata was a bustling trade and manufacturing hub in eastern India during the colonial era. Culture and arts thrived under the patronage of rich Bengali patrons and merchants, as did the social reform movements. Most of the city grew organically though a Kolkata Improvement Trust that had been set up primarily for civic maintenance functions and slum clearance. Post independence in 1947, the lack of green spaces within the city, extreme housing shortage, proliferation of urban slum settlements through immigration and refugee movement, and the lack of a planned and hierarchical system of roads within the existing city led the government to create satellite townships on the fringes during the 1970s. The state government at that time regulated the design and development of new townships in and around the city. The population growth pattern continues to date, and planners have thus envisioned several new townships in these areas to decongest the core city.

Rajarhat New Town

Keeping in tune with the overall approach toward urbanization in West Bengal, the Rajarhat New Town was planned as an integrated township with an expected population of one million to the northeast of the existing city of Kolkata (see Figure 2). It was conceived in the early 1990s as a self-contained nodal growth centre that would help de densify the
core city of Kolkata. Spread over 3,075 hectares of land, the township is being developed as a major hub for business, trade, industries, IT, educational institutions, and cultural centers within its central business district. A number of designated IT parks have been earmarked for the township in the Master Plan. Green and open spaces abound in the plan and the neighborhood concept has been upheld for the provision of services such as local markets, community centers, educational institutions, etc. Joint venture companies have been set up using the public-private partnership model to build the housing stock and other infrastructure while the state government remains in charge of the land.
acquisition, development, and sale. To date, the Rajarhat New Town remains one of the largest state-regulated planned township projects in India. It has been notified as a Planning Area in 2007 through the West Bengal Town and Country Planning Act of 1979 and has constituted a Development Authority in 2008.

Kolkata West International City

Spread over 400 hectares of land to the north west of Kolkata’s central business district (see Figure 2), the Kolkata West International City (KWIC) is India’s first integrated township project developed through 100 percent foreign direct investment. On July 7, 2004, the Government of West Bengal and the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA) entered into an agreement with Beyond Limit International Ltd.—a joint venture formed through the marriage of the Salim Group of Indonesia and Universal Success Group of Singapore. Proposed to house a residential population of 36,000, the satellite township is said to have the potential to “revolutionize the concept of modern living” for Kolkata meeting the global standards of comfort and quality of life. The concept plan for the city proposes world-class infrastructure, particularly dedicated power and water supply, and other infrastructure and services such as schools, hospitals, commercial centers, recreational centers, hospital, etc. Located in Howrah corporation area to the west of the river Hooghly, it is just 25 minutes from Kolkata’s central business district by road. Although it is a private development, the township has the “active support” of the KMDA. The entire project is expected to be completed and delivered by 2010.

DEVELOPMENT IDEA AND STRATEGY

In this section, we seek to understand what are the guiding principles, socioeconomic, political, and regulatory impetuses behind each of the townships under consideration and how the particular institutional arrangements in charge of their development have come into existence to steer these mega-projects.

NEW TOWNS IN SHANGHAI

The new towns are designated as new strategic locations of economic development in terms of real estate development due to land scarcity and demographic crowding in central Shanghai. The “Double Increase and Double Decrease” policy for the downtown area announced around 2000 limited the real estate development potential, in which green space and open space were called to increase and skyscraper and development density to decrease. Any new manufacturing facilities and the redevelopment of dilapidated neighborhoods became extremely expensive and politically sensitive in the central city. Investors, developers, and public officials started looking for new growth poles outside of the central city with connections to the global economy.

The Shanghai new towns would function as global-local nexuses where international manufacturing plants and its supporting, relevant, and advanced industries have been or will be constructed (e.g., Anting) and where high standards of real estate, education and/or high technology as basic economic sectors have been and will be concentrated (e.g., Songjiang). Among the 10 new towns, the SIAC aims to create facilities and infrastructure for industrial upgrading—from simply automobile manufacturing to a
comprehensive economic development district including trade, entertainment, and education related to the automobile industry. Part of the SIAC, Anting New Town is designed to accommodate workers and managers in the automobile-related industries as well as to attract young professionals from downtown Shanghai. The planning idea underlying the Songjiang New City is to create a new urban area to complement the existing Songjiang old city and to provide educational and residential subsidiary attachments to the central city of Shanghai.

NEW TOWNS OF KOLKATA

The impetus for developing integrated new townships on the peripheries of the existing core city of Kolkata has been generated by several socioeconomic, political, and demographic conditions post the politicoeconomic reform period that began in 1991–92. Population growth has been stagnant in the old core areas due to congestion and overcrowding. The peripheries and outer areas have therefore seen a natural growth of population. Added to this is the severe housing shortage in the metropolitan area. The current average annual housing need is 70,000 units, which is projected to shoot up to 90,000 units by 2025 (KMDA, 2000, p. 73). Thus the city’s expansion and the creation of new planned settlements to decongest the core has become a top priority for the metropolitan administration.

The changes in the regulatory and legislative framework are accompanied by a distinct shift in the socioeconomic and political life of the city that calls for improved and often world-class spaces of urban living. Foreign investors, MNCs, and banks in the city have expressed great interest in commercial spaces that are difficult to come by within the densely populated core area. A new middle class in Bengal is flocking into the newly created shopping malls in the city. There is great demand for dedicated power supply, faster highways, better schools and technical universities, entertainment, and dining and living spaces that will cater to this emergent class of urbanites. Location advantages and provision of better quality infrastructure and services also attract the young, upwardly mobile professionals to these self-sufficient well-planned communities. The modern amenities, housing, and ancillary services being provided by integrated townships are able to draw investors and consumers, and in time, may lead to a revolution of sorts in the way people live in Kolkata.

Thus, at the launch of the KWIC, the Chief Minister said, “There was a defined need for a project like this in Howrah and we are glad to be instrumental in bringing the country’s first direct FDI in housing to west Howrah” (Telegraph, Calcutta, April 14, 2006). Clearly, the shift toward urban developmentalism (Roy, 2003) and the changing skyline of the city (Chatterjee, 2004) are linked to the ongoing socioeconomic, regulatory, and political changes in the state that favor large-scale real estate and township projects on the periphery of the core metropolis. These changes are in turn reflected in the way metropolitan growth and expansion is being conceptualized and strategized by the state urban development department in general and the KMDA in particular. Building new townships is therefore conceived as a necessary instrument of planned and balanced urbanization in the metropolitan area.

While the objective of the state government is to create a fully functioning, self-sufficient urban growth center in Rajarhat that will accommodate people from all walks of life, the concept behind KWIC is that of a satellite township—which is mainly residential in
character and yet offers a complete living experience for those inhabiting it. It may have international standards of infrastructure and modern amenities, but it will come with a steep price tag whilst in Rajarhat, the cross-subsidy approach and housing quotas will ensure that at least a portion of those displaced by the urban development project, and the economically vulnerable section of the population, also find affordable housing for themselves. If attracting foreign direct investment for urban infrastructure and real estate development is the driving idea behind the KWIC, the Rajarhat New Town is conceived as a growth magnet that will reduce density in the city core, as more and more middle- and upper-middle-class families aspire to a changing and more suburban lifestyle.

THROUGH A COMPARATIVE LENS

Both Shanghai municipal government and Kolkata state and local governments view new town developments as new economic growth poles and as magnets for wealthy households and young professionals. The entrepreneurial governments provide land and physical arrangements to host high-end housing and economic sectors to connect with global production chains. The underlying rationale is that the decentralized local governments should be deeply involved in urban development to create economic growth opportunities at a metropolitan scale. The state-enabled mega-projects function as important tools to facilitate urbanization and utilize international and domestic investment in the two metropolitan areas.

The scale of the new town development in Shanghai is much larger than that in Kolkata. Ten new towns have been planned and designated at the same time to attract manufacturing, high-tech sectors, and tourists. In Kolkata, future township development plans embrace the IT sector and its enabled services as well as biotechnology, manufacturing, chemical industries, and high-end housing as focal points of attracting investment in township development.

SIAC is built on the existing automobile manufacturing plants, upgrading the industry to better connect with the global economy, while Songjiang New City is initiated for educational and real estate development on the basis of Songjiang old town. The two new cities with economic, social, and cultural bases are not planned as satellite townships for central Shanghai. They are planned to be self-sufficient in terms of employment, housing, and daily living, even though they rely on the existing adjacent townships at their earlier phase of development when the retail and grocery stores are not well established.

Rajarhat has comparable size and functions with the new cities in Shanghai. The comprehensive land use arrangement illustrates the similar perception and expectation of new town development in these two metropolitan areas to decongest the old urban core by providing self-sustained new towns outside the central city. However, the KWIC serves as a satellite township of Kolkata with the relatively simple function of real estate development. The KWIC with a land area of about 1.5 square kilometers has similar scale and function with two new settlements within the new towns—Thames Town in Songjiang New City with one square kilometer land area and Anting New Town within SIAC with 2.38 square kilometer land area. All three are planned for providing housing to families looking for the high-standard western lifestyle.

The location selection reflects the strategic relationship of the new towns to the central city. The new cities in Shanghai have three to four times longer distance to downtown than both new towns relative to central Kolkata. Shanghai municipal government
employs green belt outer ring road (waihuan) as the urban growth boundary, while Kolkata does not. Rajarhat and the KWIC maintain strong linkages to central Kolkata, while the Shanghai new towns lean on the surrounding townships. The strategic objective of decongestion of the central city is more feasible to achieve in Kolkata than in Shanghai due to their shorter distance to downtown.

More importantly, the planning of Shanghai’s new towns is intended to boost more economic development with little concern for the urban poor. Housing reform in China has transferred residence from state welfare to market provision. The Anting New Town and the Thames Town sell housing units only at market prices, even though the Shanghai municipal government and local district governments offer financial subsidies. Since new towns in Shanghai are basically developed on farmland, the compensation to the peasants can be much lower than that in redevelopment in the urban core. The original local residents generally can not afford to purchase the new commercial housing on their once-owned farmland.

Rajarhat New Town employs the cross-subsidy approach and housing quotas to ensure that at least a portion of those displaced by the urban development project, and the economically vulnerable section of the population, find affordable housing. However, since the township is being developed on erstwhile farmland, compensation packages under the current land acquisition laws are meager and not anywhere near market rate. The KWIC takes a different approach to Rajarhat New Town, relying totally on foreign direct investment. All houses in the KWIC will be provided at market rate, same as the cases in Shanghai. However, the public investment from the Shanghai government in the new towns guarantees the state authority in decision making, while the state loses control over the development of the KWIC.

Economic Sectors

In this subsection, we compare the four townships on the basis of the key development sector, which will underpin their growth and sustainability as future cities. This will also reveal the complex relationship between the government machinery and the market in the development and valorization of urban space.

New Towns in Shanghai. Shanghai has been a major site for global production since the early 1990s. The SIAC is planned on the basis of the existing automobile manufacturing industry and developed to host advanced automobile-related sectors. It includes R&D (Shanghai Automotive Industry Quality Testing Research Institute), entertainment (Formula 1 racetrack), education (Tongji Automobile College), trade and exhibition (a novel city-level used car trading center), and real estate (the Anting New Town with 5,334 residential units).

Anting features the Bauhaus style of building and landscape of Weimar, Germany (see Figure 3). The urban image of Anting is characterized by multifunctional block structures, a mix of uses in the center, public open spaces, and pedestrian-friendly streets. While the building blocks are five-stories tall along the main roads, the building height is reduced to four or three stories within the residential blocks. The target market of the amenities and facilities in Anting is middle- and upper-middle-class families and young professionals. With a convention center, a five-star business hotel, and a world-class gym, AS&P—the German design firm—brings global standard services to Anting. With Anting New Town construction, additional international capital has flowed into Jiading District.
as well to develop luxury amenities such as a 300,000 square meter shopping mall. All these amenities have never targeted the lower income households and actually increased the living cost in the area.

The basic sector of Songjiang New Town is real estate (Thames Town and other residential projects) and education (Songjiang University District, including campuses of seven universities such as Shanghai International Studies University). Manufacturing industries (Songjiang Industrial Zone) and tourism destinations (Sheshan Scenic Spot) are located in the surrounding area, which hosts multiple economic sectors for Songjiang New City. In Thames Town, there are 61,199 square meters of multistory residential buildings, 14,413 square meters of town houses, 86,363 square meters of single-family houses, and 59,612 square meters of mixed use development, as well as galleries, kindergarten, schools, a church, a supermarket, and taverns.

Songjiang New City has different floor area ratios for different sections. Thames Town is prepared for high-end customers, which only provides single-family houses or townhouses. The price of the England-style villas ranges from 5 to 50 million RMB (700,000 to 7 million US dollars). The surrounding places have been developed by a variety of developers, and contain both middle- and high-rise residential buildings. The average price for the rest of Songjiang New City is about 5,000–7,500 RMB per square meter. It is still not affordable for the lower income households. A lot of workers in the new towns have to live outside of the towns. Although most Tudor-style mansions have been sold, some to
The church in the center of Thames Town, Songjiang New City. 

Source: Photo by Danfeng Li, July 2008. 

Note: This photo shows fashionable young couples having their wedding photos taken in front of the church in the central square of Thames Town, Songjiang New City. This kind of photo op may make the young couples feel globally connected through a false sense of “instant immigration” without leaving the local. Unlike the German town in Anting, Thames Town has mostly single-family homes, some of which cost over one million US dollars. While a lot of these mansions have been sold, some to Westerners, many of them appeared to be unoccupied based on the senior author’s observation two years ago and again in July 2009. This may account for why the church is not used for its real purpose but as a photo backdrop.

Westerners, a good number of them remain unoccupied. This may account for why the central church in Thames Town is rarely used for its religious purpose but more often acts as a photo op backdrop for Western-oriented newly-wed young couples over the weekend (see Figure 4).

The economy of the old Anting and the new SIAC is primarily tied to and dependent on automobile manufacturing and its related services, which are closely connected to the global economy and expected to provide jobs with diverse income. Blue-collar jobs in the car factories could provide relatively high income for low-skilled workers. The new development initiative for Songjiang focuses on education-related activities, which provide jobs for many highly educated people. Songjiang New City also creates jobs in the service industries such as office cleaning, gardening, and security. The typical pay for these kinds of jobs would be a little higher than that of peasants, but not high-pay jobs by any means. The workers in these sectors may be easier to replace than the workers in the automobile-related sectors that require more skills and training. The scale and dominance of the automobile industry in Anting is expected to create some spillover or multiplier effects on the local economy through the growth of low-end service jobs that benefit other local residents or inmigrants.
New Towns of Kolkata. In the Kolkata metropolitan area, several factors have influenced the ways in which integrated townships are being planned and designed. The growth of the IT sector, West Bengal’s emergence as the top investment attracting state in the country (ASSOCHAM Report, 2008), inexpensive rentals, a successful private-public partnership model, incentives from the state government, political stability, and a fair playing field for all real estate developers have made it an attractive business destination. Real estate and investment firms, both foreign (e.g., Jones Lang La Salle, C.B. Richard Ellis) and domestic (DLF Pvt. Ltd., Unitech, Shrachi), have already invested or are eager to do so in large-scale mixed use development projects in Kolkata.

Thus, real estate ventures and IT industry dominate the design, layout, and planning of township projects in Kolkata. In Rajarhat, where Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HIDCO) plays the lead in planning and developing the township, due importance has been given to the growing and specialized needs of the IT sector. Located adjacent to the Nabadiganta Industrial Township (also known as Salt Lake Electronic City) where the bulk of the IT industry is located, Rajarhat will provide the much needed residential and commercial base for those working in this growing sector. In addition, it will serve as a center for new regional level community facilities, establish a new business district, provide land for nonpolluting, inoffensive, and nonhazardous industries, and develop an environment friendly and aesthetically attractive urban settlement functionally integrated within the future metropolitan structure.

In short, Rajarhat will be a self-sufficient urban center, paying heed to the need for a desirable place to live and work in. This has been reflected in the Master Plan and land use break up for the township, wherein open spaces have been given top priority as well as the growing needs of commercial space for setting up IT/ITES businesses have been accommodated through successive planning stages. In the original land use plan made in May 1999 for 3,075 hectares, residential space accounted for 50.6 percent, industrial land for 6.5 percent, commercial land for 4.6 percent, institutional use for 0.7 percent, transportation zones for 9.8 percent, and open spaces for 28 percent. In the revised land use plan made in 2006 for 3,779 hectares, residential space would get only 38 percent, industrial land 6 percent, commercial land would account for 10 percent, institutional use for 8 percent, transportation zones for 11 percent, and open spaces for a much lower 24 percent, while 4 percent of 135 hectares were to be diverted for use by IT sector users (source: interview with General Manager, HIDCO, March 18, 2009). The new and high-end commercial housing demanded by the professionals working in these sectors with global connections in Rajarhat contrasts sharply against the local poor (see Figures 5 and 6).

In KWIC, the unique selling point is the world-class living style that the developers and realtors hope to bring to Kolkata. With 6,100 bungalows, four high-rise residential towers, three IT parks, a 13-acre club, a 200-bed hospital, two schools and shopping and entertainment zones, the proposed township promises to change the way Howrah is perceived. According to Jakarta-based NRI, Prasoon Mukherjee, of the Universal Success Group, the motto of the developers is to “create a new integrated township to ensure an international-quality lifestyle with lush, open spaces, stylish homes and a host of amenities in a composite basket” (The Telegraph Kolkata). Targeting the higher income bracket consumers, the township lays emphasis on large and small open spaces, six different types of plotted homes arranged in clusters with vehicle entry points to each. Unlike the Rajarhat Township, the emphasis is on residential and recreational spaces such as in satellite...
townships of the past. The design, planning, and layout of the KWIC resonates with the concept of gated communities in the developed countries, where the intention is to sell the premium real estate to high-end buyers looking for world-class residential space and amenities in a secure, enclosed environment.

However, the development of the KWIC with active support from the KMDA, is a part of a massive investment as expressed by the Salim Group Chief Executive, Mr. Benny Santoso. National and city newspapers reported that the Salim Group had voiced their interest in developing infrastructure such as roads and bridges in the state, and also requested land to the tune of 7,000 acres for setting up sector-based integrated townships such as a Knowledge City and a Health City outside the KMA in South 24 Paraganas (The Hindu Business Line, June 17, 2006). The “health city” will have the most modern facilities
and equipment and is expected to attract “health tourists” from abroad. The “knowledge city” will focus on research in the fields of biotechnology, nanotechnology, biophysics, and so on, serving as a magnet for future investors (Frontline, Vol. 22, Issue 23, November 5–18, 2005). Salim Group has entered into an agreement with Mr. Prasoon Mukherjee’s Universal Success, to set up a two-wheeler manufacturing unit at the Uluberia Industrial Growth Centre, again at Howrah, close to the integrated township. The group has already acquired a little over 65 acres for this factory at a price of Rs 6.5 crore (The Hindu Business Line, October 20, 2005). Mahabharat Motorcycle Manufacturing Company Pvt Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Salim Group, is expected to provide employment to at least 3,000 people. The KWIC is therefore unique in the way foreign direct investment is being wooed and utilized in the development of urban areas in and around Kolkata.
A COMPARATIVE CAPSULE

The new towns in these two metropolitan areas place different emphases on the development of economic sectors, illustrating various approaches to connecting local economy with global capital and production chains for and during the production of globalizing local space.

The SIAC has transferred a single manufacturing-based economic structure to multiple auto-related sectors. The upgrading of Anting’s industry is essentially the promotion of connections to the global economy. Trade, R&D, exhibition, and entertainment of automobiles enable a high-level entry of Anting into the global auto-related industry. The export-oriented strategy of the SIAC is the strongest among the four new towns. Songjiang New Town focuses on educational, cultural, and real estate industries, and is linked to the global economy in an indirect and subtle way. International retailers and real estate developers participate in Songjiang development for guaranteed returns on their investment because of the mature community established in the old Songjiang.

Rajarhat New Town basically focuses on the IT sector and its related service industries. Though lagging behind Bangalore, the Rajarhat city region is designed to become the IT hub of Eastern India, building upon the local talent of the workforce, the comparatively lower costs of doing business and the greatly improved infrastructure such as electricity and water supply. The high-technology development, especially high-tech-related services, has been better in India than in China in general. Although India has been better involved in high-tech service export than China, the protection of national-owned manufacturing industry has limited Indian capacity of product-based export. This general difference in industry structure has influenced the economic sectors built in the new towns.

Meanwhile, the KWIC, Anting New Town, and Thames Town in Shanghai have highlighted the significance and economic potential of providing world-class, high-end housing to international workers such as managers in the international firms, nonresident Indians and Chinese, and wealthy local people who cherish the life style and quality of life in the West. This type of residential construction is essentially an important means of producing global cities. The new towns in both metropolitan areas will function as globalized local spaces in terms of the provision of gated enclaves for people with international connections.

Institutional Linkages

In this subsection, we discuss the institutional arrangements for planning and developing the four new townships. While highlighting the role of the local and regional government vis-à-vis other development actors, we attempt to throw light upon the complex negotiations and process of assembly that takes place and the effect they have upon the production of new urban space.

**New Towns in Shanghai.** The entire planning process of the “One City Nine Towns” plan as well as the plans for each new town is characterized as being state driven, top down, and exclusive. The Shanghai government adopts an entrepreneurial approach to the production of the globalizing space. The Anting New Town was designed and developed under a single state-owned developer, while multiple real estate developers developed Songjiang New City under the administration and guidance of a quasigovernment corporation (see Table 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Actors</th>
<th>Anting</th>
<th>Songjiang</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan government</td>
<td>Shanghai municipal government</td>
<td>Shanghai municipal government</td>
<td>Initiate new town development; provide the starting funding of planning and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning authority at the metropolitan level</td>
<td>Shanghai Urban Planning Administrative Bureau</td>
<td>Shanghai Urban Planning Administrative Bureau</td>
<td>Make decisions for location selection, basic type of building and landscape; provide basic planning principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level government</td>
<td>Shanghai Jiading district government</td>
<td>Shanghai Songjiang district government</td>
<td>Cooperate with Shanghai metropolitan government and deal with local issues in planning and development processes such as land acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban development corporation (semipublic firms)</td>
<td>Shanghai International Auto-City Real Estate Development Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>Songjiang New Town Development Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>Cooperate with different levels of government and departments; master plan, land acquisition, infrastructure development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multinational corporation</td>
<td>Volkswagen JV</td>
<td></td>
<td>Invest in new town development, provide ideas and requirements for planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic developers</td>
<td>Shanghai International Auto-City Real Estate Development Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>A variety of domestic real estate development corporations, such as Shanghai Henghe Real Estate Development Co. Ltd. for Thames Town</td>
<td>Develop real estates based on master plans and regulations provided by urban development corporations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International planning and design firms</td>
<td>AS&amp;P (German design firm), the winner of the design competition for Anting New Town</td>
<td>Artkins (British design firm)</td>
<td>Provide new concepts in planning and high construction standards from the West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic design firm or institution Residents</td>
<td>Jiading Urban Planning and Design Institute</td>
<td>A variety of domestic planning and design firms</td>
<td>Cooperate with international design firm to localize planning and design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mega-projects serve as a vehicle to establish exceptional measures in planning and policy procedures that are poorly integrated into the general urban development process and planning system. They were usually initiated by means of freezing conventional planning tools, bypassing statutory regulations and institutional bodies, and creating project agencies with special powers of intervention and decision making (Moulaert, 2003). The Shanghai municipal government has aggressively adopted place-promotion strategies, and the state-driven large-scale urban development projects function as a tool of economic growth (Zhang and Fang, 2004). The state-owned urban development corporations (UDPs) are established for mega-projects, which have the function of determining how to spend the public money. Within the implementation of mega-projects, UDPs serve to adjust the relationship between state and market to better meet the demand of international economy.

With more authority on local affairs, cities could shape their image and develop new activities according to national or international demands. Mega-projects are part of the significant efforts of local authority to respond to globalization. Shanghai basically follows the strategy of mega-project development in the United States as most projects are initiated by public officials and supported by private businessmen. And there is little evidence of resistance to New Town development. Over the past 15 years or so, Shanghai government—alone or in concert with the private sector—has heavily relied on the planning and implementation of large-scale urban development projects to enforce the competitive position of metropolitan economies in the context of rapidly changing local, national, and global conditions. Public officials such as mayors were the most frequent initiators of the mega-projects and took the lead as well in “mobilizing support, developing strategies, and assembling resources for them” (Alshuler and Luberoff, 2003, p. 256). Business-led private groups play a critical but supportive role. Local residents of the acquired land are on the defensive vs. mega-projects, considering that community organizations and nonprofit organizations in Shanghai and in China are still weak.

Street Offices and Residents’ Committees in Chinese cities have similar functions with the community organizations in the United States in terms of managing local affairs including security, sanitation, and mobilization. Street Office, however, is part of the administrative system in Shanghai, reporting directly to the district government, which in turn reports to the municipal government. Residents’ committee operates at the lowest level of the urban administrative hierarchy. Their status determines that the basic attributes of Street Office and Residents’ Committee are different from community organizations in urban America, which act as the watchdog to hold the local government accountable (Lu, Ren, and Chen, 2009). Therefore, any resistance to the mega-project development in Chinese cities occurs on an individual basis instead of via any organized form. In the planning and implementation of mega-projects, the absence of institutions to protect the interests of local residents creates strong social tensions, which strengthen the role of global capital in shaping the plan and implementation of large-scale urban development projects in Chinese megacities like Shanghai.

The planning process is mainly oriented to and controlled by public officials, with the participation of professional planners, investors, and developers. The 10 new towns were selected in different districts and then designated with the architectural style and town landscape of certain foreign countries. The designation was a complicated process and basically decided by the local-state interaction including the Urban Planning Administration Bureau of Shanghai Municipal Government, and the Jiading and Songjiang
District Governments. Multinational corporations have shaped the idea of the local authorities. For instance, the selection of architecture to represent a European-themed town was based on the multinational firm(s) located in the district. It was reported, “Since Volkswagen JV is located in Anting town, so naturally the overall planning of Anting is according to German style.”3 The town of Luodian, which hosts a Volvo plant, is to adopt the Swedish architectural style. Specific urban development corporations such as Shanghai International Autocity Real Estate Development Co. Ltd. were established to implement the Plan. International competition for master planning and urban design was held for each town, although the design firms from the themed country were favored from the outset. For example, eight German design firms were invited to participate in the competition for the planning of the Anting New Town. The winner of the competition collaborated with a domestic design firm to carry out detailed planning for land use, infrastructure, and landscape. While the New Town plan for Anting was done by a single real estate development firm, a variety of real estate development companies were involved in the planning of Songjiang’s development.

New Towns in Kolkata. In contrast to the two case studies from China, the planning and development of the Rajarhat New Town and KWIC show more variations in the roles played by different development agencies involved in large-scale urban development projects. While the Rajarhat New Town is planned, designed, and developed directly by the West Bengal government through the statutory body of HIDCO, the state planning body (KMDA) remains a mere facilitator in the planning and development of the KWIC, where foreign investors and developers play important roles (see Table 3).

The key players in the initial conceptualization of Rajarhat and its planning have been the state government, the West Bengal Housing Department headed by Minister Gautam Deb, and a host of local consulting firms. In an unprecedented move, the planned township project was taken up by a government institution, HIDCO, that had been created especially for this purpose. Normally, such a project would have actually been undertaken by the KMDA, the statutory planning and development organization for urban projects in the metropolitan area, under the State Urban Development Department. However, after the conceptualization and initial feasibility studies conducted by KMDA and the planning departments of local universities, HIDCO was formed and given the authority to plan and implement the entire township project in coordination with the housing department. While HIDCO is in charge of acquiring, developing, and selling off the land, other state departments are involved in ensuring major infrastructure such as roadways, water, sewerage, and drainage are put in place. This is unique in terms of planning and development wherein a new urban local body is being forged from scratch with the help of a special purpose authority.

What sets apart the Rajarhat township from other state government-led urban development projects is the introduction of public-private partnerships in the domain of housing. Most of the large land parcels for cooperative-style housing have been given to big private developers such as Ambuja, Unitech, Schrachi, etc., through these partnerships with the West Bengal Housing Board. Inside these large land parcels, the partnerships take up integrated housing constructions, and some of them have even undertaken housing for all income groups through a cross-subsidy approach.

Unlike the Chinese case where the housing design and architecture follows international style, in the Rajarhat case there is no such blatant effort though international
### TABLE 3. The Role of Institutional Actors in Kolkata’s Two New Towns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Actors</th>
<th>Rajarhat</th>
<th>Kolkata West International</th>
<th>Role in New Town Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State-level government institution</td>
<td>West Bengal Housing Board, Govt. of West Bengal</td>
<td>West Bengal Departments of Municipal Affairs and Urban Development</td>
<td>Initiating the talks on new town development, location and plan conceptualization, initial financing, land leasing mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-level infrastructure boards</td>
<td>West Bengal State Electricity Board, Public Works Department, Public Health and Engineering, Irrigation and Waterways Department</td>
<td>West Bengal State Electricity Board, Public Works Department, Public Health and Engineering</td>
<td>Provision of electricity, main roads, water and sanitation, drainage, and sewage provision to the upcoming urban centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Government</td>
<td>North 24 Paragas district government, South 24 Paraganas district government</td>
<td>Hooghly District</td>
<td>District-level governments do not have much role in these township developments. They are superseded by state government and metropolitan planning authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning authority at the metropolitan level</td>
<td>Kolkata Metropolitan Planning Committee, currently Bhangar-Rajarhat Development Authority (BRADA)</td>
<td>Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA)</td>
<td>Drawing up master land use plan, coordinating with other departments and lower level government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level government</td>
<td>Rajarhat Gopalpurn Municipality in North 24 Parganas and Bhangar Municipality in South Parganas</td>
<td>Howrah Municipal Corporation</td>
<td>Local administration and governance, maintenance of existing infrastructure and inputs to plan making, integration with surrounding areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Development Corporation (semipublic firms)</td>
<td>Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HIDCO)</td>
<td>Kolkata West International City Pvt. Ltd. A joint venture private company</td>
<td>In charge of land acquisition, land filling, development, preparation of master land use plan, coordination with other development agencies, infrastructure provision, and township building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Actors</td>
<td>Rajarhat</td>
<td>Kolkata West International</td>
<td>Role in New Town Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multinational corporation</td>
<td>Salim Group, Giputra Group, USE group of Singapore formation of Beyond Limit International Ltd.</td>
<td>Investing in real estate, design of township and provision of infrastructure and other basic services.</td>
<td>Building residences/residential enclaves within new towns, particularly high-end apartments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic developers</td>
<td>A number of domestic developers (Ambuja, SShrachi, Unitech, DLF) forming joint ventures with the housing board through public-private partnership</td>
<td>NK Realty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign real estate investment firms</td>
<td>Jones Lang La Salle, C.B. Richard Ellis amongst others</td>
<td>Trammell Crow Meghraj Property Consultants amongst others. STUP Consultants Private Ltd amongst others</td>
<td>Market studies, financing of housing, investments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local design, planning, engineering firms and consultants</td>
<td>Consulting Engineering Services, Development Consultants, Ghosh, Bose and Architects</td>
<td>Initial planning and design of infrastructure provision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing residents in and around mega-urban development project area</td>
<td>Farmers organized collectives, strong opposition party politics, environmental action groups, displaced landless/sharecroppers collectives</td>
<td>Farmers organized collectives, grassroots organizations</td>
<td>Resistance to large-scale displacement, meager and unfair compensation, forcible and often violent land acquisition, strong objection to environmentally degrading land filling and planning that disturbs wetlands and drainage, forceful and “illegal” conversion of agricultural land to real estate/urban development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
design standards are being met and construction technology is being revolutionized with sky scrapers being built for the first time in Kolkata. Accordingly, planning norms, particularly residential density and FSI restrictions, have had to be altered for the new township to maximize on open spaces within the plan. A number of foreign investment firms, real estate firms, and housing finance institutions have made their presence felt in the city. Their focus is on the young upwardly mobile professionals and growing middle class who aspire to live in a “global city.” Since this is a government-led, top-down, regulated, and planned township there has been a deliberate emphasis on minimizing the negative socioeconomic impacts of displacement through cross-subsidized housing, housing quotas for the vulnerable sections of population, provision of service villages, and resettlement housing and compensation.

Due to the long-term presence of the ruling party even in these remote urban fringe areas, it is portrayed that land acquisition had been peaceful at first. In the past year or so, however, the fallout of strong political opposition to the “forceful” acquisition of land in Singur and Nandigram to put up industries has ignited the ire of local peasants. This has fuelled peasants and sharecroppers, oppositional political parties, and the intelligentsia to organize and collectivize protest against the government, which had once come to power in Bengal for its progressive land reform and redistribution policy in the villages under the Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPM. In May 2009, the local resistance to land grabs for mega-projects like the KWIC, ironically under the CPM, led to many candidates from its Left Front government, which has been ruling West Bengal for 32 years, losing seats to the opposition party, Trinamool Congress (livemint.com, May 4, 2009).

Another emergent actor in this scenario that links the global to the local scale is the media that portrays such struggles and nongovernment organizations that fight for land rights, etc., on several different scales and have international as well as national funding. The local city government is mostly silent in these developments, being overshadowed by the might of the state government and the emergence of private organizations in the field of housing development.

In the KWIC, the players involved are slightly different. A consortium of foreign investors takes the forefront with the KMDA playing the facilitator’s role. Initiated by the state government, the state industrial development board, and the municipal affairs and urban development departments played an active part in wooing foreign investors to the project. The foreign consortium then had to team up with another Indian partner in a joint venture company that was then entrusted with the task of planning and developing the KWIC. The state government is responsible for land assemblage and leasing.

EVALUATING INITIAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

NEW TOWNS IN SHANGHAI AND KOLKATA

While these new towns are by definition and timing of development relatively recent, they have exhibited a number of distinctive outcomes that reflect the strong influence from the drivers or “producers” of this kind of mega-urban development. Evaluating these initial outcomes will help clarify why and how the new towns have produced spaces that also take on a life of their own with real consequences for the people living there.
First, we have seen the emergence of economic inequality and displacement of the poor in and around the new towns. Since “high profit-making capability of the new growth sectors rests partly on speculative activity” (Sassen, 1994, p. 6), the real estate market in Shanghai as exemplified by profit-driven new town development has brought about severe inequality, which is exasperated by developers trying to produce high-rent-yielding spaces to capture the “exchange value.” On one hand, inequality in Anting manifests itself through the gated high-priced German-style apartments and their green lawns served by low-wage migrant workers from the villages of Anhui province who make do with crowded peasant houses in the nearby or farther villages and ride bikes to work in Anting. With the price of the residential buildings rising to 7,000 yuan (US$1,000) per square meter, only expatriates and senior Chinese managers and engineers working in the nearby VW plant can afford to buy, while even some of the middle-class Shanghaiese who have a desire to move into Anting could be priced out.

Similarly, in Kolkata, the two new towns reflect the aggressive market-oriented reforms in housing pursued by the West Bengal State government. Although private and foreign direct investments have revived a flagging housing market that was unable to supply the annual demand for housing, it has been a skewed production in favor of upper- and middle-class housing (Sengupta, 2006). The much hyped public-private partnership policy undertaken by the Government of West Bengal was intended to produce housing for all sections of the population, including those belonging to lower income groups, by combining private efficiency with government accountability. Most of the township projects being conceived in Kolkata, and Rajarhat in particular, have been justified citing the need for urban land supply to house all socioeconomic classes, particularly the poor, even though very little of this is reaching the poor. In Rajarhat, only 21 percent of the total housing being constructed is for the Economically Weaker Section and Lower Income Group. This percentage is almost negligible in the KWIC, which relies completely on the sale/lease of housing units to upper income brackets. Moreover, the high cost of developed land in these new townships price out the poor despite the provision of cross-subsidies. Most of these integrated townships envisage a mix of socioeconomic classes with respect to housing. However, spatially they fail to adequately address the needs of the poor who will be unable to afford the lifestyle spaces, malls, convenience stores, schools, hospitals that these townships have to offer. More importantly, despite the mention of “service villages” to cater to the need of economically weaker sections in the conceptual plans, such new townships do not have space delimited for informal economic activities, which forms almost 40–50 percent of a city’s economic sector. Such service villages, where present, are not fully integrated into the urban fabric of the planned new towns, leading to spatial and social segregation.

It is evident that there was no voice from the original residents during the whole process of new town development in Shanghai. No official news reports were found on where the displaced people went and how their lives without the farmland on which the new towns were built were affected. Preliminary investigations did not lead to any records on any government policies for helping the displaced local residents, peasants, and low-income workers in the Shanghai region.

In this aspect, Kolkata’s new town development is somewhat different from the Shanghai cases. In Rajarhat, the role of the state government in regulating the development decisions is evident wherein the stated objective for the megacity is to house all income groups, and create a mixed-income settlement with mixed and integrated land use, with
particular emphasis on resettling and rehabilitating those displaced by the project, either through monetary compensation, alternative housing in the project area, and jobs keeping in mind the urban reality in Kolkata. Planners have also taken into consideration the influx of a floating population of 500,000 on average each day engaged in informal economy—mostly those providing services to the high-end residential complexes, shopping mall, eateries, and offices. HIDCO has given preference to those who have been displaced and need to be resettled. The KWIC does not have any such stated objectives, though planners say that the boom in real estate and construction activity it generates will have a spin-off effect on creating jobs for lower skilled classes.

In recent times, West Bengal has been rocked with organized protests from farmers groups, and landless laborers who claim police atrocities during forcible land acquisition. The opposition party in Bengal, headed by Mamta Banerjee, has lent voice to these protests against the Communist party-led state government (*Frontline*, Vol. 22- Issue 23, November 5–18, 2005). While some of these organized groups are resisting forcible acquisition of land and giving it away to wealthy industrialists and foreign developers at a pittance, others are voicing their indignation at the meager compensation packages that are nowhere near the market rate. Bloody protests in Singur and Nandigram since 2005, against conversion of agricultural land to industry and real estate development, have recently led to the withdrawal of TATA Motors from Singur, adjoining Rajarhat. Reports are flowing in now about resistance in Rajarhat where those who gave up their lands in the hopes of being gainfully employed in the upcoming ventures, have not been rehabilitated. For example, earlier in 2008, local farmers and village women got together to protest the proposed land acquisition for an IT park near the Vedic Village in Rajarhat (*Times of India*, Kolkata, October 12, 2008).

Second, these new towns exemplify the problem of massive new investments in industrial and transport infrastructure and high-end residential construction in the urban fringe without the coordinated development of social and commercial services. Without good schools and hospitals, as well as convenient shopping and adequate entertainment, even the people who can afford to buy into the new towns and have private cars to drive to these services would hesitate to do so. This mirrors a broader phenomenon of Shanghai’s suburban residential complexes, some of which were built for lower income displaced central city residents, being vacant for extended periods of time due to the lagging development of and residents’ access to service facilities.

While this may be true of the Kolkata West International case, the integrated township of Rajarhat aims to accommodate all possible forms of land uses within its boundaries. Therefore, a number of good schools and technical universities have already started functioning in the upcoming city. Moreover, the proximity to the IT township in Salt Lake and the establishment of IT complexes in Rajarhat have ensured that the work place to home travel is minimized for residents. However, preliminary findings and interviews with residents associations in the housing enclaves suggest that Rajarhat faces teething problems, particularly for the lower-income and middle-income households who do not own cars. The lack of local grocery stores, vegetable and fruit markets, public transport is adversely affecting lower-income households. Moreover, supply of water and electricity and maintenance of roads is at best sporadic in the new township, creating hardship across all classes. In the KWIC, though a hospital and a school have been incorporated into the master plan, the residents will be greatly dependent upon Kolkata’s existing CBD for work. Moreover, the high-end residential enclave will continue to be dependent upon
the urban poor who offer their daily services in the form of maids, drivers, washer men, security guards, etc. Yet, there is no provision within this exclusive enclave to house the service class like in the Anting New Town near Shanghai. As in many parts of India, this will lead to informal settlements cropping up next to the high-end enclaves.

Third, the new towns in Shanghai and Kolkata are themselves the outcomes of top-down large-scale planning initiated and implemented by the government with technical assistance and input from the planning profession. From a comparative perspective, the United States engaged in “do no harm” mega-projects from the mid-1970s onward (Alshuler and Luberoff, 2003), even though the planning process and financing of mega-projects have become more transparent, with more decision-making power given to the public. But investing in mega-projects in American cities remains very controversial. On the other hand, large-scale urban development projects in European cities are criticized for their democratic deficit. And public participation in mega-projects like Shanghai’s new towns lacks even more due to the resilience of the party-dominated political structure. Though democratically elected, this is true of the 30-year-old Communist government in West Bengal as well, which is now rolling out the red carpet for private investment in urban development and infrastructure, particularly housing. People, particularly those affected by these large-scale developments, have been kept in the dark about the township plans or else coerced into selling off their lands at negotiated prices, often to middlemen who reap huge profits. Although according to the Land Acquisition Act, public notification is an important step of the procedure, very rarely are land losers engaged with or asked to actively provide their own inputs into the proposed plans. People’s participation in the case of these two new town developments has been limited to discussions between the state government officials, bureaucrats, private investors, politicians, and prospective engineering and planning consultants.

In the two New Town projects in Shanghai, the municipal government’s attempt to align local dynamics with the imagined or real requirements of a deregulated international economic system is the major driver or producer of urban development. While there is the strong external pressure of global capital and the internal market forces, planned urban development carries the day in transitional China (Zhang and Fang, 2004) as a tool of relative arbitrary power of state authorities. Decisions to implement this kind of mega-project, which affects millions of people, are generally made by a handful of people high up in the political hierarchy, without input from concerned individuals and local communities. The new towns also reflect the conundrum of the new distribution of power between the central and local government. The central government, which serves the primary redistributional function, has retreated, whereas the local government, which has gained more authority on local affairs, pays less attention to redistributional social outcomes to avoid losing its priority of economic competitiveness. In theory, the local government should introduce policies to help the people who bear most of the cost of new town development, but it has largely failed to do so in practice.

In Kolkata’s metropolitan expansion through new township development, party officials in the higher echelons of the government are the movers and shakers. For example, the Rajarhat new town development project was initiated by the then Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu, and the Housing minister, Mr. Gautam Deb, who later on became the Chairman of HIDCO. On paper, the Rajarhat land acquisition process has been largely peaceful. The state government has claimed this was primarily due to the systematic formation of neighborhood committees comprising political leaders from ruling and opposition
camps, farmers, share croppers, and residents of the area (Chatterjee, 2004) to negotiate issues related to acquisition and compensation. However, the decision to build the KWIC, and the state government’s role in facilitating it by wooing the foreign investors, marks a departure in the way the state government has dealt with private investors in the past. In this signature international project in Kolkata, top state officials visited Indonesia to hold talks with the Salim Group, showcasing Kolkata’s attractiveness as an emerging business destination. Since the deal was signed between the state government and the foreign joint venture, the former has played a critical role in the land acquisition for the KWIC, in hastening the preparation of land use and development controls, and in dealing with resistance to industrialization and urban development from the grassroots peasant community.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis undertaken here depicts some of the processes by which dynamic urbanism rapidly unfolds in Asian cities. Such cities no longer have Paris or New York as their referents of development but draw inspiration from Shanghai, Dubai, and Singapore. As emphasized by Ong and Roy (2007), it points to a heterogeneous Asian globalization in which local actors and institutions, particularly the state and city governments, local developers, and urban middle class, are actively involved in the production of new towns.

However, in each of the cases we studied, the growing social and spatial polarization of the rich and the poor becomes evident as the peripheries proceed to become inhabited and revalorized through new circuits of capitals. The overall emphasis on exclusiveness of new developments commanding world-class infrastructure with little or no regard for the basic needs of large numbers of poor urban inhabitants leads to what Graham and Marvin (2001) have described as “splintering urbanism.” The state and its institutional appendages are deeply implicated in this process as land acquisition and large-scale infrastructure development such as roads and drainage continue to be carried out by governmental institutions and not the private sector.

The third important point that the comparisons have brought into focus is the complexity of the institutional arrangements that are forged between different stakeholders in the development process and the relative power and authority that the local- or state-level governments may wield against private or market forces of development. A case by case analysis across two very different political and economic contexts shows us that each new town development has been conceived and planned with different norms and layouts, reflecting the type of institutional arrangement driving the process of urban development. For instance, in Rajarhat, the strong presence of the state government through HIDCO has led to some consideration of housing the urban poor while in the Kolkata West International Township; such considerations do not even arise. In both the SIAC and Songjiang New City, semigovernment development corporations have operated in the planning and development process. Even though representing the state, this type of agency has not provided enough assistance to the people who have been negatively affected in the developments. This institutional arrangement essentially helps the implementation of visions of the state about the new towns. The party-dominated state does not necessarily guarantee a primary concern of the original local residents and the urban poor.
Finally, the new towns we have studied are socially and spatially far removed from the “pariah edge” described by Mike Davis (2006), where the periurban landscapes are dotted by slums or shanty towns adjacent to most developing country megacities. These new towns also differ considerably from the kind of export processing zones and special economic zones that were built in developing countries from the 1960s to the 1990s (Chen, 1994, 1995). Instead, the new towns offer a lot of gated enclave living to a growing urban middle class in the Chinese and Indian megacities who have demand and taste for such housing. There is also demand generated by nonresident citizens who seek to buy property in these areas as investments rather than as living spaces. While local developers speculate on property development in far flung out areas, bigger and often foreign-based developers are investing in real estate on the fringes.

The last point that emerges from our comparison is the lack of organized protest in general from those who are displaced by the rapid transformation of agricultural land to urban land under the cloak of “public purpose” when the state exercises its power of “eminent domain” to forcibly acquire large swaths of land on these fringes. In Kolkata, some form of politically organized mass protest has recently gathered momentum regarding land grab and even scored an election victory in the May 2009 national election. In Shanghai, however, such voices have been deliberately suppressed or ignored in the media to facilitate grand-scale urban development and global city building. If this is an essential comparative lesson from our article, it only highlights what we have uncovered in this special issue and what more we can learn through more such efforts. It is only fitting that in light of how Xiangming Chen introduced this issue at the outset, Sujata Patel will offer a final look at what the four papers have done and what may lie ahead.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

1 Adapted from www.as-p.de.
3 same as footnote 7.
4 A term used by Logan and Molotch (1987) to compare with the “use value” of the land for residents.

References


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Newspapers and Other Reports


