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Urban Influence on Fringe Areas of Mysuru City: A Sociological Analysis

G. R. Divyanandan¹ and Prof. M. H. Krishnappa²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Research and Studies in Sociology, Karnataka State Open University, Muktagangotri, Mysuru 570006 & Assistant Professor, GFGC, Zalaki, Aland taluk, Kalaburgi District, Karnataka

¹ Prof & Head (Rtd.), Department of Research and Studies in Sociology, Karnataka State Open University, Muktagangotri, Mysuru 570006

ABSTRACT

Urban expansion has gained much more momentum in the 21st century as a global phenomenon. Estimates indicate that by 2025, just two years away, the percentage of the world's population living in cities and towns will rise from 9.2 percent in 1900 to 65 percent. Even the developing nations, with India being a premier country among them, hold globalisation and sister processes (liberalisation and privatisation) responsible and support them with considerable achievements in science, technology, commerce, communication, transportation, and educational advancements.

People refer to the Urban Fringe as the "institutional desert" because of the unchecked growth in urban expansion; although the urban area is usually relatively developed, the Fringe is characterized by intensive and changing land use patterns, a high land price, and a dense, mobile population.

Fringe studies from a sociological and qualitative perspective are lacking in India. Based on ongoing research (for a PhD), this paper attempts to delineate the urban influence on the village communities in the fringe area of Mysuru City. The findings indicate that the City Expansion Project of the government has both positive and negative impacts on the PAPs (Project Affected Persons). These impacts include loss of livelihood, social disorganization, and financial instability, as well as new occupations and ways of living that benefit the younger

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Research and Studies in Sociology, Karnataka State Open University, Muktagangotri, Mysuru 570006 & Assistant Professor, GFGC, Zalaki, Aland taluk, Kalaburgi District, Karnataka

² Prof & Head (Rtd.), Department of Research and Studies in Sociology, Karnataka State Open University, Muktagangotri, Mysuru 570006

generation and those at the bottom of the hierarchy, providing an escape from the hegemonic rural caste/class structure.

Key Words: Urban Fringe, Globalization, Liberalization, Privatization, Village Communities, Livelihoods, Caste/Class, and Transformation

1. Introduction

The study of social change and transformation is one of the chief subject matters in sociology. Following industrialization, people hail urbanization for its significant role in leading to structural and functional transformations among rural, tribal, and backward communities. Urbanization is an essential socio-economic phenomenon taking place worldwide, beginning with the end of World War II; its pace and character increased or changed along with the onset of globalization and its sister processes of privatization and liberalization. For that matter, urban areas, compared to rural and tribal areas, cover a small proportion of the world's land surface, but they have been increasing steadily in recent years. Urbanisation has brought about significant changes in the natural landscape, resulting in significant alterations to the environment, the natural landscape, and the socio-economic structures that shape people's daily lives.

Increased or heightened urbanization inevitably results from the spatial expansion of towns and cities beyond their hinterlands and peripheries to accommodate the growing urban population (Schenk, 1997). Growth has led to what is known as urban sprawl, which has positive and negative outcomes. Examples of positive impacts include economic growth, technological and industrial advancements, educational advancements, and infrastructural development. Conversely, negative impacts include the escalation of environmental degradation and hazards due to rising pollution, health risks, fast-paced lifestyles, and the loss of traditional institutions. This results in the submersion of many villages in urban areas or cities. The apparent fallout is the large-scale exodus of rural dwellers toward cities and the encroachment of agricultural lands in the fringe areas. Additionally, a significant amount of land will be converted to urban land cover (ibid).

Some hypotheses and arguments:

- Areas close to the city get more influenced or come under the city's influence to a greater extent than those which are not so;
- The intensity of urban influence on the rural areas decreases with the increase in their distance from the city;
- Considerable socio-economic and environmental changes in the economy, land use, and agriculture take place, with choice of goods for domestic and daily life and
- An increased population in urban areas also increases the requirement for more supplies.

Thus, improving living standards leads to the complexity of life and demand for secondary, tertiary products from the fringe areas.

Urban-Rural Relations

Sociologists and social scientists have categorized relationships between urban and rural areas as occurring in the following sectors:

Agricultural, industrial, trade, financial, socio-cultural, education and health-related, communication and transportation, and administrative and political sectors are all included.

Therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship between the two areas. The rural areas supply agricultural products, human labor, or services and receive awareness, cash income, and secular forms of work from the urban consumers.

Study Area and Data Base

Mysuru City, in southern Karnataka State, India, forms the universe of study. It was a small city in the early 20th century, the capital of the Princely Rule till independence, and later came to be known for its cultural attractions of the Palace, the world-famous 'Dasara' procession, the Chamundi Hills, the Krishnaraja Sagara Reservoir/Dam, the Zoological Gardens established by the king, and its surrounding places like Srirangapatna and Bandipur Sanctuary. The city was an "urban village" till the 1980s, with several rural pockets like the Kannegowdana Koppal, Tonachi Koppal, Kumbara Koppal, and others. The 1980s and onward witnessed a gradual and steady rise in the urbanization of Mysuru.

Findings of the Study: Sustainability of Links between Rural and Urban Centres

As the city expanded, its population increased because of migration from the Fringe and far-off areas. The Fringe and urban centre are locked in a mutually dependent linkage system. While the city provides various forms and income levels of employment to the immigrant or commuting population from the adjoining rural area/s (the Urban Fringe), the villages supply agricultural and non-agricultural services and products. These include milk, meat, vegetables, fruits, grains, and services. Mysuru City has about 27 -30 fringe villages supplying the above commodities. The people from the villages use various forms of transportation depending on the distance to reach Mysuru city, such as by cycle, motorcycle, tempo or goods vehicle, tractor, or walking.

Thus, our study found that the village economy has changed. People's dependence on agriculture is declining; there is more occupational diversification than 40 years ago. A notable factor here is middle-class mobility. Agricultural lands bordering the city are used for other purposes (e.g., Dhaba, petrol bunks, tender coconut sales, petty shops, tea stands, and mini shopping complexes). Farming practices and cropping patterns have changed from producing what sells in the city. Examples are cultivating vegetables, fruits, and cash crops, indicating a shift from traditional methods to modern technologies and crops. Using irrigation and applying chemical fertilisers, pesticides, and insecticides became more pronounced and inevitable, considering the shift in cropping patterns.

3.1 Infrastructure in Villages

The villages in the fringe area have come to possess better Housing, sanitation, and drinking water infrastructure through bore wells, electricity, roads, schools, and health centers. A primary school in every village is a national policy, and the government's flagship programs like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan have led to higher literacy levels (GoK, 2015).

3.2 Socio-Cultural Changes

Sociological studies have identified many indicators of impact on the urban Fringe caused by the completely urbanised borders of a city and the considerable spread of secondary and tertiary activities within it. The impact indicators are (a) population density, sex ratio, population growth rate, and rise in non-agricultural workers and land use.

Of the three demarcations into Fringe, core, and periphery, the Fringe is more incredible than the others. The inner layer of the Fringe is only Urban. Its outer or extended Fringe is mainly rural. Manufacturing activities have been widespread since the 1980s. The development or expansion of the urban Fringe is due to rising industrial, commercial, and trade-related significance. Earlier (up to the 1980s and 1990s), agriculture was widespread in the Fringe, with more than 70 percent of land devoted to it. Cultivable waste is reduced to a great extent. There is much 'not-cultivated' land, which is a built-up area that is also encroached. Overall, the land use pattern in the urban Fringe is heterogeneous. We observed the rise in commerce – retail shops selling local goods, outlets for the rural farmers and artisans to sell them in the weekly markets, and selling their agricultural produce.

Even before the formation of residential layouts around Mysuru city, fringe area industries like rice mills and sugar factories, mainly in Mandya and Bengaluru were established. Subsequently, several service activities began during the first decade of the New Millennium. Irrigated land was mainly used to commercialise paddy, vegetables, and flowers. The farmers we interviewed in the fringe area's villages also told us they began adopting innovative farming practices.

What about the landless and marginal land-owning artisans? Both land-owning rich and middle farmers have started brick kilns, poultry, sale of nursery plants, pots, milk co-operatives, and mutton stalls. Thus, theoretically, such economic interrelationships characterise city-hinterland relationships amidst metropolitan development.

3.3 History of Emergence of Urban Fringe

In pre-independence, the villages around Mysuru city were characterised by inter-caste dependence based on traditional caste practices based on *the Hadade* or *Jajmani* system (Srinivas, 1980). Caste-based endogamous occupations were carried out by the respective caste and subcaste groups. The pattern continued for at least two decades, even after independence, i.e., the 1950s and 1960s.

By the end of the 1980s, land value in the Fringe began to rise. Mysuru city had already received attention for its industrial development, and the expansion process had commenced. Several new enterprises like Falcon Tyres, Vikrant Tyres (while The Ideal Jawa motorcycle manufacturing company was already there in *Yadavagiri*) and a few others began to make their way on two roads basically: in *Vishveshvarapuram* on Mysuru

Manandavadi Road (where already the Mysore Silk Factory, Railway Workshop, and a few others like *Agarabatti* (incense stick) manufacturing companies existed; and on Mysore-Hunsur Road (Mysore-Mangalore Road).

These brought several new migrants to the city. Residential extensions were beginning to evolve off Premier Studio on the one hand and beyond *Brindavan Nagar* and *Aziz Sait Nagar* (K R Mills area) on Srirangapatna road. The government set up the Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) in 1988) which took upon itself the responsibility of forming residential layouts and allotment of residential sites to the applicants on a specific basis. As the land value in the Fringe rose, competing interests and values vied to acquire the contract for building construction and tenders for the supply of materials. The land market became extremely valuable as the government began acquiring agricultural land from the farmers on prime locations and routes, depending upon layouts' formation.

3.4 Changes in Social Relations

As we know and sociologically established, in India, land ownership is structured on a caste basis. The dominant castes in each state own a large extent of land and are economically, therefore politically, dominant, wielding much power and authority over the socio-economic and political helm of affairs in the village community (Srinivas, 1995). The concept of this dominance has been much researched and documented by sociologists. While they own 70 to 90 percent of the total land in a village, that is, too fertile land with irrigation access, the middle and low castes put together their own in marginal extents and lands that are dry, lacking in irrigation, and therefore barren.

Thus, the large landowners from the dominant castes of Vokkaliga, Lingayat, and Kuruba received lump sum compensation for the land acquired by the government.

Table 1: Loss of Land due to Urban Expansion

Loss of Land for Urban Expansion	Bogadi		Ramana Halli		Siddalingapura		Srirampura		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	29	58.0	28	56.0	10	20.0	16	32.0	83	41.5
No	21	42.0	22	44.0	40	80.0	34	68.0	117	58.5
Total	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey

They went on to capitalise on this opportunity with heavy cash in hand. Some have bought land elsewhere, while others have built new houses or rebuilt/renovated their present house for rental purposes. The expanding city began to have many officers, bank staff, and industrial workers for whom residential arrangements too close to the place of work were needed. Many others invested their compensation amount in other enterprises or outlets.

3.5 Land a Coveted Community in Urban Fringe: New Occupations for Land Owners

Thus, capitalising on selling agricultural land, these former landowners realised that the land became a scarce and coveted commodity by lying on the urban Fringe. More than anything else, it fetched a high price for Housing. Market forces prompted the former landowner³ to take on new occupations. These new economic roles

³³, among whom some had lost all their land. However, there were few such persons; many had land on other sides of their village here, the MUDA, which did not require

included Housing, construction, commission agencies, and transportation. They have taken on roles like Promoters, Builders, and contractors of new housing societies.

Table 2: Benefits of Being a Fringe Village of Mysore City

Benefits	Bogadi		Ramana Halli		Siddalingapura		Srirampura		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Grow & Supply Fruits & Vegetables to the City	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	49	98.0	199	99.5
House sites formed and sold to city residents	50	100.0	50	100.0	49	98.0	50	100.0	199	99.5
To open shops for petty trade	50	100.0	50	100.0	49	98.0	49	98.0	198	99.0
Petrol bunk	50	100.0	50	100.0	49	98.0	49	98.0	198	99.0
To sell on roadside tender coconut, vegetables, and fruits we grow	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	49	98.0	199	99.5
To open a Tea Stall and Petty Shop	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	200	100.0
To start a Dhaba	50	100.0	50	100.0	49	98.0	49	98.0	198	99.0
To start a Liquor Shop	50	100.0	50	100.0	49	98.0	48	96.0	197	98.5
Shopping Complex	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	48	96.0	198	99.0
Others	10	20.0	7	14.0	34	68.0	3	6.0	54	27.0
Total	50	-	50	-	50	-	50	-	200	-

Source: Field Survey

3.6 Welcome Break from Traditional Occupation/s

The land owners we interviewed have found these new roles a welcome break from their traditional occupation, agriculture. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the increasing failure of crops and the rising cost of cultivation in the last two decades due to climate change, failure of rains and seeds, the rising cost of inputs, declining productivity, fall in prices of agricultural commodities, fluctuation in market prices, and others.

Joint families continue to exist in most of the fringe villages in the study, but nuclear families are trendy. This is particularly true of the migrant families who reside at the city's border, either in the slums or elsewhere.

There is a noticeable rise in women's decision-making and empowerment. They are members of women's self-help groups exposed to institutional finance (banks) and microfinance (savings). They are beneficiaries of several independent programs; wage employment and self-employment are high among these women. Exposure to the city has taught them functional literacy, with the help of which they manage their family's economy, children's education, benefits from the government, and awareness about self-development. There is a decline in early marriages, although it is not uncommon to marry off girls at 17-18 years of age. Girls also migrate or commute with their mothers for casual labour or domestic work in nearby urban homes.

Several noticeable cultural changes occur, such as the use of plastic and electronic goods, changes in dress and food habits, and the sending of children to the city for high school and college education, in some cases for technical education and training. Thus, urban expansion is pronounced in the fringe villages.

Table 3: Changes in Rural Customs, Practices and Values due to Expansion of Urban Area

Changes	Bogadi		Rammana Halli		Siddalingapura		Srirampura		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes, Very Fast	50	100.0	49	98.0	49	98.0	42	84.0	190	95.0
Nothing like that. Villages have changed even when away from the city	0	0.0	1	2.0	1	2.0	8	16.0	10	5.0
Total	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey

1.7 Impact on the Landless and the Marginal Farmers

The landless and marginal land-owning farmers living in the urban fringe villages have a different set of issues.

The Marginal landowners

The latter, marginal farmers, lost the little land they had inherited from forefathers. Their lands were unproductive due to poor irrigation, soil fertility, poverty, and backwardness. Poor returns hindered them from investing in the land using good inputs such as quality fertilisers and short-term commercials that could be marketed for a profit. The loss incurred, ed when the government acquired whatever marginal extent of lands that they owned was twofold:

- they lost the land which produced their foodgrains for domestic or household consumption and the fodder for their domestic animals;
- but, most importantly, they lost a valuable economic asset that they possessed. Immovable property, i.e., land, is invaluable even when not productive or cultivated for profitable crops.

Barring the pain of losing their land on the one hand and suffering due to incomplete and/or insufficient compensation paid to them, the owners of marginal lands were disgruntled about responding to our queries on their experiences as urban fringe farmers/landowners.

Table 4: Ownership of Agricultural Land

Own Agricultural Land	Bogadi		Ramana Halli		Siddalingapura		Srirampura		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	27	54.0	9	18.0	5	10.0	15	30.0	56	28.0
No	23	46.0	41	82.0	45	90.0	35	70.0	144	72.0
Total	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The Landless Villagers of the Urban Fringe

In their responses, the landless residents of urban fringe villages expressed that they had nothing to lose or to gain. In fact, by comparison, those from low and former untouchable communities, now labelled as the scheduled castes (SCs), were somewhat relieved that they no longer had to work for the dominant and upper castes in the village, also because bonded labour or Jeetha was abolished only on paper by Law, and not in reality. Subjugation

to the upper, dominant castes, providing them agricultural and non-agricultural labour for low wages, inequality in allocation of benefits by the government (under MGNAREGA, Housing,

Table 5: Wage Labour under NREGA to Self and Family Members

Wage Labour	Bogadi		Ramana Halli		Siddalingapura		Srirampura		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	2	4.0	4	8.0	0	0.0	3	6.0	9	4.5
No	48	96.0	46	92.0	50	100.0	47	94.0	191	95.5
Total	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey

credit and others.). However, they faced sudden unemployment locally when the government acquired their masters' lands due to the expansion of Mysuru City. Their village was lying on the urban Fringe. While the resourceful upper and middle castes were able to manage due to their other occupations (like poultry, milk, petty shop, and others), the members of SC and low castes were too resourceless to survive, having lost their only source of survival, agricultural and non-agricultural labour under the upper/dominant castes.

Table 6: Land Grant from the Government

Land Grant from the Government	Bogadi		Ramana Halli		Siddalingapura		Srirampura		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	0	0.0	1	2.0	0	0.0	3	6.0	4	2.0
No	50	100.0	49	98.0	50	100.0	47	94.0	196	98.0
Total	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The only resort for them was to take up whatever coolie (casual labour) that came their way in the city and its suburbs. Some even left the village and migrated to the Fringe to set up a hut and stay there; others commuted using the good transportation now available due to urban expansion.

Table 7: Livelihood Base after Loss of Agricultural Land

Particulars	Bogadi		Ramana Halli		Siddalingapura		Srirampura		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Agricultural Labour	7	24.1	5	17.9	1	10.0	3	18.8	16	19.3
Non-agricultural wage labor	8	27.6	16	57.1	6	60.0	5	31.3	35	42.2
Pottery ⁴	0	0.0	5	17.9	1	10.0	0	0.0	6	7.2
Weaving	0	0.0	6	21.4	1	10.0	0	0.0	7	8.4
Gold Smith	0	0.0	5	17.9	1	10.0	0	0.0	6	7.2
Carpentry	0	0.0	5	17.9	1	10.0	0	0.0	6	7.2
Hair Cutting	0	0.0	5	17.9	1	10.0	0	0.0	6	7.2
Washerman/Laundry	0	0.0	5	17.9	1	10.0	0	0.0	6	7.2
Petty Trade/Shop	1	3.4	5	17.9	3	30.0	0	0.0	9	10.8
Sheep/Goat Rearing	0	0.0	6	21.4	1	10.0	0	0.0	7	8.4

⁴ Pottery, Weaving, Gold smithy, Carpentry, Hair Cutting and Laundry as Caste Occupations

Migrated, now returned	0	0.0	5	17.9	1	10.0	0	0.0	6	7.2
Any Other, Specify	15	51.7	23	82.1	7	70.0	8	50.0	53	63.9
Total*	29	-	28	-	10	-	16	-	83	-

Source: Field Survey

Those who were better off (hailing from the lower castes) felt better off comparatively speaking because, back earlier to acquisition, there was no consistent work availability under their masters; more than that, they suffered much oppression and inequality in payments and treatment. Their children could not attend school and were pulled for bonded labour; their women could not join self-help groups for fear of attack by upper castes.

Thus, in many ways, they confessed that land acquisition in the urban Fringe, expansion of the city and its hinterland, and new residents who were not locals but from other districts and states caused by the IT and BT boom were acting favorably for them. Some even reported being " better off" due to new employment opportunities in the urban fringe area and the inner city of Mysuru.

Another exciting development linked to the above is that the new occupations are also caste-based. For example, the community of *Parivara Naikas*, whose caste occupation is fishing, among other things, began to sell fish in the new localities. Those with the capital set up a small roadside temporary selling point; those who did not prefer to go around selling fish on push carts as street hawkers. Similar was the case of fruit and flower sellers.

Table 8: Village-wise Caste Profile of the Respondents

Caste Category	Bogadi		Ramana Halli		Siddalingapura		Srirampura		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
SC	7	14.0	14	28.0	14	28.0	31	62.0	66	33.0
ST	0	0.0	20	40.0	1	2.0	0	0.0	21	10.5
2A	1	2.0	3	6.0	9	18.0	0	0.0	13	6.5
2B	0	0.0	3	6.0	2	4.0	0	0.0	5	2.5
3A	40	80.0	6	12.0	12	24.0	0	0.0	58	29.0
3B	2	4.0	1	2.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.5
OBC	0	0.0	3	6.0	12	24.0	19	38.0	34	17.0
Total	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey

The *Bhovis or Vodda* community, whose caste occupation is stone and mud work, has taken to building construction as labourers. The landless and marginal land-owning people from the blacksmith and *Thigala* caste have taken to electrical work—installation and repair at homes. The mobile phone has been of immense use to them, as the customers call their supervisor/Mestri, and he sends them to those houses on a commission. All these have enabled them to manage their families’ survival and economic and other interests.

Women from poor and SC households have taken up work as domestic help; some educated girls work as ayahs to take care of kids. Anonymity about their caste background is essential to obtain any work, according to Vanajamma, an SC woman from Siddalingapura.

Table 9: Total SC and OBC Respondents

Caste Category	Bogadi		Ramana Halli		Siddalingapura		Srirampura		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
SC/ST	7	14.0	34	68.0	15	30.0	31	62.0	87	43.5
OBC	43	86.0	16	32.0	35	70.0	19	38.0	113	56.5
Total	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey

To sum up, each social group tries to negotiate the transition using one's ability and resources. In one way or another, all castes have benefitted from the urban development process. The upper castes have benefitted much, and poor Dalits live in the same poverty conditions, depending on the government for reservation benefits. However, some have converted their agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, leading to occupational change and shifting them from the narrow, constricted village life to the secular, open, formal urban economic nexus. They work in the unorganised sector with no fixed wages and suffer displacement and job loss.

3.8 Major Problems Encountered by the Fringe Villagers

The villagers living on the Fringe have complained about bearing the noise and smoke pollution emanating from the 24-hour 365365 traffic on the nearby Highway. A large number of vehicles ply on these roads.

Secondly, the city's unplanned, haphazard expansion is causing several problems for the nearby villagers. The impact on their health is most significant here. Most fringe villages and regions along the main road leading to the city continue to have many low-lying areas, open spaces, and sites where houses/buildings are not yet constructed are used for sheep/goat grazing and even defecation. Several diseases germinate due to stagnant water around the borewells, and sewerage water flows in the open without a drainage system. The use of chemical fertilisers, insecticides, and pesticides breeds here, causing health impacts and the bacteria joining the food chain through the crops grown (especially greens). Intestinal worms, diarrhoea, asthma, skin diseases, and virus attacks are common ailments in fringe villages.

3.9 Conclusions

Thus, Mysuru City's rapid urbanisation following industrial, commercial, and technological expansion, particularly in the post-1990s, has had a significant impact on its fringe villages. However, this impact is not entirely open or impersonal. It is not uniform across all social classes and castes. In other words, it is partial, selective, and differential, largely influenced by the social and economic background of households in the Fringe, which is determined by land ownership and skill enhancement. Thus, based on their power structure, the dominant castes of Vokkaligas and Lingayats have established a distinctive foothold in the city's growing economy. They have consolidated economic status and political power in the new urban environment. Women, in particular, are experiencing significant changes in their education, employment, marriage alliances, and lifestyles. The SCs, STs, and Muslims, with their historical backwardness, marginality, and vulnerability due to

inferior social status, landlessness, low education, and poverty; insecure and unstable livelihoods; and disabilities in the sectors of health, housing, education, and employment, have taken up low-paying jobs. This study has conducted a micro-level analysis of the grassroots realities of the urban fringe and its inhabitants. Urbanization is not a process that is unbiased and unipolar. Urban fringe opportunities reflect or depend upon and react to the needs of different socio-economic strata. The ongoing social process determines who gains, loses, survives, and manages.

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