CHAPTER V

ISSUES ARISING

The advantage in limiting the study to a particular area is the specificity and variety of data that would be available for one to work with, and consequently, the specificity and variety of the findings and results. If the area is extended, some of the specificities and variety can get averaged out and yield results which would be less particular and, therefore, more generalisable. Discussion, often enough, is in terms of the less particular and the more generalisable. The value of a particular result and the specific instance is that it would serve as a counter example to some of the generalisations in terms of which the debate is being conducted. The value in studying urbanisation of the state of Tamil Nadu, therefore, is that the result can serve as a counter example to some of the currently held views on urbanisation in India or of some bigger region which includes India. "Thus, the underdeveloped areas of the world are 'over-urbanised' in that larger proportions of their population live in urban places than their degree of economic develop-
ment justifies." This is one such generalisation. Is Tamil Nadu an instance where this is true? This is the kind of issue that arises out of the study of urbanisation in the state of Tamil Nadu. Such issues, however, cannot be discussed within the framework adopted for this study. The method of observing the phenomenon cross-sectionally over a period of time used in this study is essentially a method of historical description and as such one that does not afford any evaluation of the phenomenon at any point. All that were observed were treated as contingent. Whether, for instance, the slump in the thirties need have occurred, or having occurred was it good that it occurred are questions that cannot be raised within the framework adopted in the study. Generalisations like the one given above are evaluative and, therefore, cannot be entertained in the framework of this study.

However, the factual basis of such generalisations can be examined and one can hope to discover

thereby the value premises of such generalisations and present them without comment. This is the limited task attempted here. Principally, three such evaluations are taken up for such examination. They are: (i) "But it is crystal clear that the existing 1,927 towns are nowhere near enough to set in motion the transforming forces that are the sine qua non of a self expanding development process." (ii) "Thus, the underdeveloped areas of the world are 'over urbanised' in that larger proportions of the population live in urban places than their degree of economic development justifies." (iii) "It is suggested that the specific form of urban growth, stunted and parasitic, should be expressed by the term 'urban accretion' which may be defined as the distorted growth of urban centres in relation to their own economic basis on the one hand and to the regional economy on the other."

The argument that towns are not in sufficient number is supported by the calculation that

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3 Philip Hauser, ibid.

4 Amitabh Kundu, op. cit. p. 25.
the villages to town ratio in India works out to be 293 villages per town, whereas, for purposes of comparison, it is eleven to twelve per town in the United States. The market connection, through which the town forming forces are conveyed, is in the present state, beyond the reach of a large number of villages and, therefore, of the population in the country. It is held together with this derivative that the village communities cannot, in any case, become effective production centres because of their archaic structure and the smallness of scale. What is appropriate in such a situation is 'intermediate' urbanisation, a nation-wide network of occupationally diversified market towns which will afford the right scale and at the same time provide the required market connection to the rural communities.

The factual basis of this view has been questioned. If all the places that afford marketing opportunities to rural community is considered, the ratio worked out would be one town for 14 villages for Maharashtra. It is found to be almost the

F.A.G. Robinson, ibid, pp. 6-11.
Suohir Wamiali, op. cit. 3.003.
same for Tamil Nadu. The ratio in this case is quite close to one town to eleven and twelve villages in the United States and, therefore, it cannot be made out that the rural areas in India are poorly served by the market. The calculations erred so badly because village fairs were left out or else disqualified from being market occasions of any importance.

The problem, no doubt, is wrongly stated but assuming that the solution, somehow, is independent of the problem as stated, is it one that is likely to work? It has been shown that there are towns in Tamil Nadu which tend to serve themselves and other towns more than they serve the villages around them. Our study has noted a state of disconnection between urban places and the rural areas in the non-surplus 'dry' regions of the state. As far as the 'dry' region is concerned, one could agree with the empirical

438 towns and 637 village fairs to 15,735 villages is as one market place for 14,664 villages.

8 Barbara Harris, "Rural-Urban Transactions, A case study from India and Sri Lanka," Centre of Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, p. 185.

9 Chapter II, pp. 52-55.
studies regarding the tendency of urban places to un hinge themselves from the rural area. If that is indeed so then the chances are that a market town established there would fail to provide the villages around the requisite market facility. They might instead migrate into them as observed in this study.

In the 'wet' region, it is observed, urban places and rural areas settle into a parity relationship whereby the rural area ruralises the urban phenomenon and keep it on a level with the other localities around. An urban area in that situation can hardly be expected to set in motion "the transforming forces that are sine qua non of self expanding development process". They hardly grow at all in that region. In either case, the solution of planned intermediate urbanisation does not appear to be the most efficient strategy for 'rationalizing' production and exchange in rural areas, at least, as far as this state is concerned.

Once the factual basis is shown to be wrong and the solution divorced from known contexts what would

10 See Chapter IV, p. 178,
remain. of the argument is no more than the belief in the transforming power of the market discipline to overcome the archaic structure of rural communities and to make them fit for the self-expanding development process. The generalisation stands on the belief that rural systems are inherently irrational and that an urban contact, if provided, will open them out for the rationality of the growth process.

The 'dysfunctionality' argument as advanced in India proceeds from a historical premise. "Developing countries", it is submitted, "have almost invariably inherited both an undeveloped economy and a distorted organisation of space from the period of colonial rule." That inheritance, it is argued, has led to the top-heavy character of Indian urban structure and in turn "to the development of under-development in the vast rural hinter-

11 The view expressed here is that of Amitabh Kundu as advanced in his "Measurement of Urban Processes: A Study in Regionalisation" which has been cited earlier and in two of his papers presented earlier to the book.

-lands and persistence of dysfuctional modalities in the Indian economy."

The historical distortion of organisation of space may be attributed firstly, to the new administrative set up and secondly, to the imperial infrastructural investments. It has been noted that break-up of the local regions consequent upon the establishment of colonial rule did unsettle the locality-level integrations in the state. It is also noted that there was a movement of local level functionaries into urban centres following their involvement in state level grain trade. There have also been instances of urban developments resulting in poor integration of localities with metropolises. Probably the more serious and permanent distortions are to be associated with the establishment of railways. It is true that the

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13 Kundu, ibid. p. 20.
14 See Chapter IV, pp. 133-134.
15 ibid., p. 135.
16 The development of Salem, a major urban centre in the 'dry' region, is a case in point. See Brianorton, op. cit. p. 32.
major agglomerations in the state developed at the nodes of the railway network in the state. If the top-heaviness of the Indian urban structure is associated with the agglomerations, then it certainly is true that it is associated with the imperial infrastructural investments in railways. If the case is against primacies, then it will have to be somewhat qualified. It is true that the four largest cities dominate the whole country. But in that domination there are areas where primacy is not so pronounced. There are also instances of a network of more or less 'independent' cities rather than of a complementary and mutually interconnected system.

The distortion is sometimes measured in terms of the 'development of under-development' in the vast rural hinterlands of the major urban centres. But that measure can be shown to be a doubtful one.

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17 62.5% of agglomerations are found along the two main railway lines in the state.
19 ibid. p. 315.
20 Aninditha Kumāru, op. cit. p. 20.
First of all, in one major empirical study of this aspect, the dysfunctionality is not universally established. Some urban centres are dysfunctional while others are not, at least not as much as some others. In Tamil Nadu the tendency for towns to become dysfunctional has been noticed. But the conditions under which this can take place cannot be presumed to be universal. It is seen that it may well be the case that towns in the surplus growing 'wet' region are not dysfunctional.

What did emerge from the Tamil Nadu case is that while the agglomerations in the 'dry' region could be considered dysfunctional with respect to the rural area adjacent to them the product of the industry in these agglomerations, notably modern agricultural inputs like electric motors and pump sets, have served rural areas in the 'wet' region by raising agricultural production and productivity.

Further, while it may be the case

21 Urban centres in Punjab and Haryana were found to be not as dysfunctional as those in Rajasthan. Kundu, op. cit. pp. 58-85.
22 Barbara Harris, ibid.
23 See Chapter IV, pp. 176-177
24 See footnote 33, p. 194
that agglomerations do not trade with their hinter-
lands, they do serve, as the ones in the 'dry' region,
to absorb over the years a large number of immi-
grants from the rural areas. To be able to est-
ablish absolute dysfunctionality, it has to be the
case that the town does not trade with any other
town or region and that it receives no immigrants
into it at all. That could be so for the ancient
cities of the Indo-Gangetic plains which are ob-
served to be a set of independent centres rather
than a complementary or mutually interconnected
urban system. Granted a state-wide or nation-
wide transportation system, it cannot be established
that an urban place is dysfunctional if it does not
serve its immediate surrounding area. It has to
be established that it does not serve any area in
spite of the transportation system, in order to de-
scribe it as 'dysfunctional'. The 'development of
under-development' in areas around some towns is no
measure of the dysfunctionality of the urban system.

25 Economic and Socio-Cultural Dimen-
ions of Regionalisation, ibid. p. 307
It can, in fact, be shown that local dysfunction-abilities are in some way characteristic of urban systems in certain historical phases. When fixed capital forms and proliferates, they tend to concentrate so that they may share locational advantages in terms of overheads available and transport costs as it started to happen in Tamil Nadu from 1930 onwards. Unless transport advantages are uniformly available over the plain and overheads also, both of which are highly improbable or enormously expensive to realise, it will be in the nature of high output fixed capital to cluster in particular locations to maximise efficiency and simultaneously for the economy to economise on social overheads. Functional specialisation can occur in such locations. To insist that the locations' functionality be determined, instead, by the surrounding rural area, would be to obstruct the economies of location of fixed capital.

The distortion caused by top-heaviness need not be viewed in terms of instances of local dysfunctionalities. It can be viewed in terms of
the 'dialectics of disparity'. "Whatever facet we may choose to examine it is argued, "we cannot but discover the dialectics of disparity as an invariant attribute of the process. The monopolistic production function, the corporate capitalism, the primate metropolitan dominance and all such entities, by this compulsive adherence to the logic of concentration, leads to a suspension of the process of wider socialisation of technology and also to the suspension of the absolute advantage of the local resource endowment by the comparative advantage of a nationally integrated market mechanism."

The factual basis of the above argument is the transformation of the market from one based on the absolute advantage to one based on comparative advantage and the deleterious effects of that on local resource utilisation. In the case of Tamil

26 See Satyesh Chakraborty, "Development and Primate Metropolis: Some Value Questions." International Seminar on Inter-regional Cooperation in South and South-East Asia, 1975, p. 9. The view discussed in the ensuing section is as presented in the above presentation.
27 ibid.
28 ibid. p. 7.
Nadu, it has been observed that the transformation of the market had taken place prior to the emergence of the monopolistic production function. It took place in the earlier phase when the traffic in grain was being mercantilised. Again, it was attendant upon the establishment of railway network, rather than upon the emergence of fixed capital in the state. The evidence regarding effect of the market transformation on the conversion of natural resources into economic resources, is at best mixed. The argument that the monopoly production function through the national market rendered areas less centrally located incapable of converting their natural resources into economic resource, is obviously contradicted in the development of cotton textile industry in Tamil Nadu. Areas with very poor soils were turned into revenue yielding assets with cotton cultivation. This transformation into economic resource was extensive in the state upto the formation of a whole ecological region.

29 See Chapter IV, pp. 136-139.
30 Washbrook, op. cit. pp. 74-76.
31 The Southern Cash Crop Region. See Chapter II, p. 38.
The trade in palmyra jaggery in the south, on account of the establishment of distillaries in the 'wet' region, is another case to the point. While on the product utilisation side, the effect of the development of engineering industry in the state has been decisive on the paddy production and productivity in the state. Regarding the prevention of socialisation of technology the evidence is again mixed. Agro-processing industry, for instance, had spread to almost all towns and villages in the state by 1960. Field studies suggest a dispersion of casting foundries producing pumpsets in urban places in the state. The 'logic of concentration' or the 'dialectics of disparity' cannot therefore be viewed in context as anything deterministic at least as far as its imp-

32 See Chapter IV, p. 139.
33 Joan Mencher gives the following breakdown of contributory factors to the increase in paddy production. Weather 50%, major irrigation works 9%, minor irrigation works 11.5%, land reclamation 2.4%, fertilisers 14.7%, seed 8.5%, plant protection 5.2%. The contribution of the monopolistic production function to this in terms of chemical fertilisers, pumpsets and pesticides may be put around 30%. Joan Mencher, op. cit.
35 Barbara Harriss, op. cit. p. 54.
important corollaries are concerned.

The case of 'over urbanisation' is less exact and, therefore, more accommodative than the arguments considered so far. This is because the norms involved in this case basically are empirical. One well known statement of this case is as follows: "With 68.9 percent of her male population dependent upon agriculture in 1951, India is definitely in the under developed category, but she is somewhat more advanced than the average country in that category." But "modernisation has different aspects and if indices can be found which approximately measure these aspects, we can find in what ways a country is more developed and in what ways less developed than its general position would indicate." According to these measures, "India seems far behind on literacy and considerably behind on per capita income and the reduction of agricultural density. She is best off in terms of occupational structure (our measure of industrialisation) and in terms of urbanisation. Thus we may say there is some tendency for urbanisation to run ahead of other aspects of development in India, but not noticeably except
with respect to education development." But the inconsistency of such a base for the over urbanisation case has been pointed out early enough.

It has been shown that the correlation between the two indices, that of industrialisation and urbanisation is actually much higher for the developing countries than for the developed countries. Time series data for the developed countries of the world also indicated that the correlation was much higher for them during their early stages of industrialisation.

The case, therefore, cannot be made that the developing countries are more urbanised than their level of economic development warrants or that they are more urbanised than what the developed countries were when they were at the same stage of


industrialisation. The over urbanisation thesis cannot therefore, be sustained at all on the level of industrialisation measure.

The thesis, however, retains its appeal on empiricism of a different sort. A case for over urbanisation can still be made in terms of the pressure of the city size on the social overheads that can be provided in the urban places and the resultant sociology. "Over urbanisation as we have analysed it", it is observed, "is well calculated to provoke the maximum discontent in the population." Or more apprehensively, as with an extreme instance: "This is one of the greatest concentrations in existence rapidly approaching the point of break down in its economy, housing, sanitation, transport and the essential humanities of life. If the final break down were to take place, it would be a disaster for mankind of a more sinister sort than any disaster of flood or famine." The situation may be found in comparable intensities in some urban centres in the

38 Davis and Golden, ibid. p. 19.
country. That, conceivably, could serve as an empirical base of some sort to the over urbanisation thesis. It is difficult to dispute such a basis because in observations of such nature some evaluation would have already entered. One needs to proceed, therefore, to identify that subset of data on which the implicit evaluation rests. The evaluation appears to be in reference to the kind of activity arising out of or associated with the over urbanised state which is seriously described as 'informal', 'petty' or 'unorganised'. The phenomenon could offend because it characteristically interferes with and sometimes overwhelms the urban sense of orderliness.

The size of such activity is considerable. In the urban areas in Tamil Nadu it engages between 70 to 80 percent of the working population. Those engaged in 'unorganised' activity are mostly migrants into urban areas and engaged in trade.

This is computed by deducting from the non-agricultural working population those working in establishments that come under the Indian Factories Act. See also Kurien and James, op. cit. p. 82.

Tertiary activity on this account is associated with the rapid increase in size of at least new towns.

The fact that the urban places abound in this kind of activity should suggest that there is scope in these places in terms of overheads and custom. The premises of this activity are often illicit. "Many of the market places" for instance, "are illegal because they encroach public roads and retail traders are in continual conflict with the police over demarcation of selling spots."

When an urban area gets crowded with this kind of activity encroaching constantly on the roads, public transport, water and power supply, public places, banking services and its markets, it is easy enough to sense over urbanisation and to disapprove of it. On the other hand, if it is viewed as "adaptive responses to low income", making capital out of the urban situation, it could be seen to be

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42 Satyesh C. Chakraborty, op. cit. p. 16.
43 Johanna Lessinger, op. cit. p. 3.
having some stable rationale to it.

It is undoubtedly an activity that realises an unaccounted return on the social overheads that are found in urban places. But taking into account the urban situation as a whole, it could be seen to effect a rather reasonable complementarity relation with it. If public investments in social overheads enable fixed capital to form in order to take advantage of economies of scale and if they cluster in order to take advantage of external economies to further reduce costs, unorganised activity can be viewed as complementary activity wherein costs are reduced by taking advantage of the same social overhead to minimise fixed cost and thereby the total cost of production in those enterprises. One would appear, on the fact of it, as reasonable as the other. There is thus a complementarity between fixed capital and its economies on the one hand and circulating human capital, if one might describe it so, and its economies on the other, given common social overheads. The complementarity is obvious and has proved to be practical and to mutual advantage in engineering industry, for instance, which

pass some of the jobs down through a series of sub-contracts to small units in the unorganised sector. Over urbanisation on account of these unaccounted complementarities all round, can, from that point of view be viewed as something not unreasonable, even if not agreeably so.

When viewed that way, certain connections can immediately be seen. Rural non-agricultural activity, household industry and trade are typically ones which minimise on establishment or investment in fixed capital. It is worked almost wholly on circulating capital. Units of urban unorganised activity as if in accordance are also found to minimise on establishments or investments in fixed capital. Of all the rural 'units' engaged in non-agricultural activity 22.07 percent do not have any establishments; the percentage of such 'units' in urban unorganised activity is as close to it as 15.05 percent. Unorganised activity, therefore,

46 Consider for instance a rural periodic market. A great deal of non-agricultural activity takes place on those occasions without any establishments at all.
47 Tamil Nadu Economic Census, 1980. Provisional Results.
in terms of its economies and modalities can be thought of as a real extension of the rural non-agricultural activity and in that sense, it signifies a massive intrusion of 'rurality' into the urban areas. What has caused it to happen, oddly enough, is what had caused fixed capital to cluster in the place, namely, public investment in social overheads.

The basis of over urbanisation case, is thus, that urban places get uncontrollably ruralised in developing countries. But to call that over-urbanisation, as if it is something untoward, unwarranted and finally unseemly is to express a bias. Such a bias, conceivably, informs the 'under-market-edness' argument causing it to err by omitting rural markets and the dysfunctionality argument causing it to see the urban places as urban accretions and the over-urbanisation argument making it to see in the case a situation "calculated to provoke the maximum discontent in the population." The bias leads to the unintended exclusion of ruralisation processes. Such processes are actually observed in our study as when rural areas develop a parity relation with urban areas as observed in the 'wet'
region; and again when the rural migrants enter the city, swell their numbers and activity to the point of ruralising the city as it was constantly happening in the 'dry' region.

The resulting 'over-urbanisation', to those who cause it and who suffer it maximally is not necessarily a state of maximum discomfort. The density of some of the villages they had come from could be as high as that of Calcutta, the most congested city in the country. That condition in the cities which is continuous with that in the rural areas is redeemed in both instances by a collective individualistic universe, wherein "each self represents and embodies not a set of abstract, a historical possibilities, but a particular cultural tradition bounded by the collectivity of similar selves". That mentality or premise for human settlements, one might err to ignore or to disapprove. One might, on the other hand, discover in it an ethic of some value and practicability in urban situations and generally, in those where one is not ordinarily easily befriended.
