



DISCUSSION ON SPATIAL POLARIZATION BASED ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASES IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT WITH THE INTERDEPENDENCY OF TIER-1 AND TIER-2 CITIES ON EACH OTHER

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Abstract: Spatial Polarization is a concept that is led by social/ economic/ political polarization. In India, about one-third of the population lives in urban centers but this population supports two-thirds of the Indian economy. This difference slowly leads to migration towards big urban centers from small towns or villages and forms patches of different income groups with different social backgrounds (based on religion, communities, etc.). This segregation forms the spatial polarization in the urban centers. Spatial polarization based on social and economic levels is discussed in this paper and their impacts and interdependency with respect to tier-1 and tier-2 cities are discussed to understand the reason and impacts of spatial polarization in the Indian Context.

Index Terms – Spatial Polarization, Segregation in society, Economic polarization.

1. INTRODUCTION

More than 30% of India's population lives in urban areas and about two-thirds of the GDP of the Indian economy are supported by the urban economy, which clearly states the importance and growth of urbanization in India (Shaban, 2020). Urbanization is not a threat to development but it is a process for growth. Urbanization in India has its own characteristics, which is the imbalanced nature of urban growth (Bose, 1980). This imbalance growth develops different socio-spatial and economic segregation in the urban system and it is a clear example of socio-economic polarization because about 26% of the urban population lives in slums and this ratio is much higher if it is a mega or metro-city (The World Bank, 2011). According to the (Shaban, 2020), the reasons for this imbalanced growth:

- Few larger cities dominate the urban system and have control of the urban economy,
- Migration from rural to urban, which leads to a lack of basic resources (housing, water, sanitation etc.) in the urban areas,
- Social violence and poor maintenance of government policies.

All these points clarify the imbalanced growth of urban areas from the social to economic to spatial level.

One of the major concepts for spatial polarization is the economic center's concentration, especially in megacities. In addition, economic polarization is common in tier-2 cities also. However, there are different factors also which can cause spatial polarization such as social differences, cultural differences, different religious backgrounds, etc. Not all kinds of segregation between communities are people driven always; it is most of the time because of politics especially in metro cities and these political segregation effects the tier-2 cities through tier-1 cities.

This paper will cover the reason and impact of spatial polarization in tier-1 and tier-2 cities with their interdependency on each other. Firstly, this paper covers the overall reason for imbalanced growth and polarization in urban centers in India. Secondly, it talks about spatial polarization, its reason and its existence in the Indian urban system. Thirdly, the effect of polarization on tier-1 and tier-2 cities in general. This will help to understand the overall effect and impact of spatial polarization in India.

This process will help to understand the significant impact of one city's growth on another, but for this paper, the limitation will be that this growth impact will only be seen on the decreased population hierarchy of cities and only the Socio-Economic aspect will be considered.

2. POLARIZATION AND SPATIAL POLARIZATION

Polarization is increased inequality between the opinion and status of people or society. Polarization occurs when there is an increased gap between the top and bottom of society (Sassen, 2008). Polarization can be in any form, ex. income, when there is a continuous and fast loss of middle-income groups in society. Polarizations also have many other divisions such as social polarization, spatial polarization, political polarization etc.

2.1 Spatial Polarization

When the two communities (differences based on economy, social interest, cultural difference, etc.) live in two different corners of the urban area or there are, recognizable boundaries between two communities in an urban area- such difference can be identified as spatial polarization. Spatial polarization's one of the major reasons is economic concentration but spatial polarization can occur due to social and cultural group concentration also. Here, the focus will be on the socio-economic polarization in the tier-1 and tier-2 cities.

Socioeconomic polarization leads to spatial polarization. In the figure-1, the pattern of socio-economic segregation leading to spatial polarization is discussed. For example- this is seen in most of the larger or million-plus cities where most of the slums and low-income housing developed near the economic center of the city and most of the high-income group housing is far from the economic centers, and that is how a slow growth in economic segregation leads to spatial polarization in the urban system. Similarly, people need to live in the same cultural group and political riots make the social difference between people and lead to the concentration of particular groups living together.

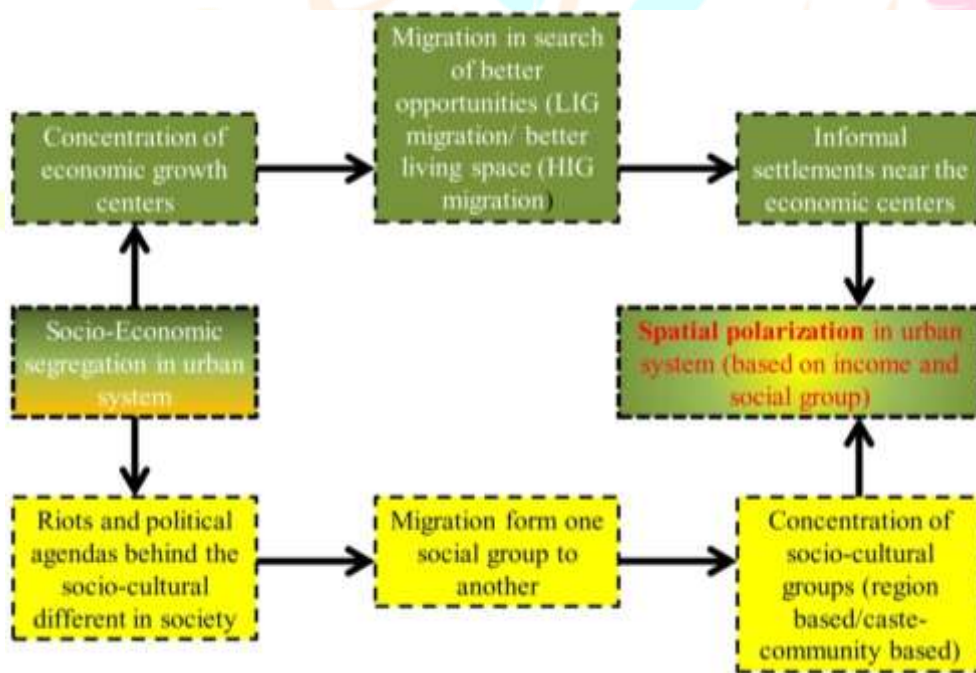


Figure 1 Socio-Economic Segregation leading to Spatial Polarization. (Source: Author).

3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS IN URBAN CENTRES

There are 53 million-plus cities in India and out of which three are 10 million-plus cities (Shaban, 2020). The social and economic growth patterns are different in Indian urban areas. In India, about one-third population lives in urban centers and that population serves nearly two-third of the Indian GDP.

The million-plus cities contribute nearly 70 to 75% of the GDP. The top 20 million-plus cities have a population of 9.6% of the country but it accounts for around 46% of deposit scores and around 59% of credit scores (Shaban, 2020). Some of the top cities like- Mumbai, Surat, Ahmedabad etc. have a credit-deposit ratio of more than one which means they take more credit out than they deposit, which comes from other cities (Shaban, 2020). This shows the economic status difference between tier-1 and tier-2 cities. Although the contribution to the economy is huge from the tier-1 cities on the same side, it is also causing a huge income gap.

Inequality in mega cities and small cities can be understood through the Gini coefficient, which represents the gap between the poor and rich in the system. Here in figure-2 the difference between population distributions of size classes of cities (class I to IV).

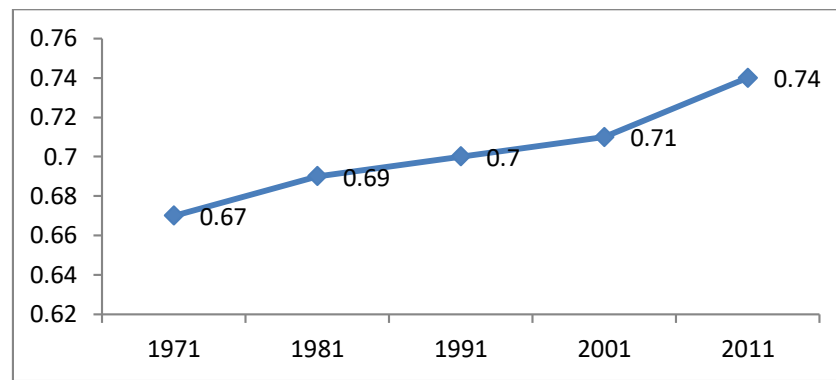


Figure 2: Gini Coefficient for population distribution in class of cities (class I to IV). (Source: (Shaban, 2020))

This graph here represents the population distribution gap between class I cities to class IV- the higher the coefficient higher the gap, which means class I cities catering more population than class IV. The problem here, one of the major reasons for this population growth in class I cities, is migration. According to the Migration in Indian metro city (Delhi) census (2001) (MoHUA, 2008) - 54.64% of Delhi's population are migrants out of that 97.79% are from the country itself and the rest are from the world. The reason for this migration is for employment and better work opportunities and about 78.51 % of this population is from nearby states (UP, Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan and Panjab). This data shows this increase in population increases the inequality in the system. Resources are limited in any urban system. If the population increases, resources will not increase with the same growth ratio and that imbalance leads to inequality in the system on the bases of income, community, etc. which slowly increases the segregation in the urban system.

If only the migrated population considered for this inequality, then: The inequality based on income increases because the people coming to a completely new city have to start their sources of livelihood from scratch and sometimes because of the economic and employment opportunities of India this takes generations to come out of the low-income group. Similarly, on the bases of community and religion, as being a social animal human needs to be surrounded by people who he feels safe with. Being surrounded by the people of same community and religion gives them the feeling of belonging to that place, which is why there is a huge socio-spatial polarization seen in almost every other city in the world (especially tier-1 cities because they have a higher rate of the immigration population).

4. IMPACT OF TIER-1 CITIES ON TIER-2 CITIES

Some concepts such as polarization always work in co-relationship with other different aspects. Either if it is economic, social or political polarization, these all will always affects the related or interdependent societies. The increase in population in megacities coming from small towns or nearby rural areas means that those towns or villages will lose their population and with this loss, those towns or villages also face the problem of a steady economic rate or decrease in the economy. The major part of the migrated population is the youth or the population aged between 20 to 64 (World Migration Report 2020, 2019), which contributes to the raise in the economic status of the city or town or villages. If this population leaves the place, society suffers from the problem of slow economic growth. Sometimes such conditions also lead to the diminishing of the towns -the concept of a dead city. In addition, in such cases, government or private investors do not bother to invest in such areas, from where the youth have migrated. One of the surveys conducted in 2020 (during the pandemic lockdown) - one of the major reasons for people's migration to a big city (Delhi from Agra) is the social life in the city [survey conducted by author]. Investors only like to invest in the project from where they can expect long-term profit and for this long-term profit, youth is the best-targeted population. Hence when the youth leaves the city, it most of the time leads to a dead city.

4.1 Social Impacts

On a social level, the most effective reason is the political agenda. In the big cities more number of the population is equal to a big vote bank and to get more votes, the more division in the society will be more votes will be biased and the more powerful the political leader will be. This division in society will be in favor of Politician if they have formed the cause of division. For example- in India, the Hindu-Muslim division and their rights are a hot topic in politics. Since the last two elections in India, such matters are effectively in light and affecting, the society to form religion-based spatial segregation (O'Donohue, 2020). The segregation on a moral level is ignored in this particular paper. Another major point is migration and the feeling of belonging with people. The migrants feel safe and more belonged when they live with people who belong to their previous living state or city. Usually, such segregation is based on states (in India). This is a type of social segregation, which leads to spatial polarizations. These segregations happen on large scale in metro cities but they affect the small cities also directly (riots reaching small towns also) and indirectly (because of these problems most of the time economic and social status gets affected).

4.2 Economic Impacts

On economic bases, polarization affects investment in tier-2 cities. According to the ministry of commerce and industry, the FDI from April 2014 to March 2017 in Mumbai and Delhi is 53.4% (31.1% and 22.3% respectively) and for the rest of the million-plus cities it was 31.6% [out of which 18.8% is for other tier-1 cities and 12.8% is for tier-2 cities(cities such as Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Jaipur, etc.)] and after that, the rest of the cities have the investment of near to 15% (Shaban, 2020). These numbers show that more than half of the FDI goes into two major tier-1 cities of India and a very less percentage is left for the

tier-2 cities. This happens because more profit-gaining opportunities are in these metro cities so more investment goes to these cities. However, with this investment, the small cities suffer a lack of investor focus, which eventually leads to slow economic growth. This is how the tier-1 cities are affecting the tier-2 cities on the economic level. Sometimes, this slow growth also goes in the formation of dead cities. This economic impact also leads to a social and cultural loss in society. India is a country with rich heritage and culture such demolition of cities causes the loss of heritage-community and culture.

5. CONCLUSION

India is a country in which a very less percentage of the population supports the very huge amount of economy, from here only the segregation can be seen and understood. Difference based on economic and social interest always leads to spatial polarization. Through the Gini coefficient and the FDI investment, the gap between income level and population level is high between the tier-1 and tier-2 cities. The reasons are mostly the way government policies and political decision impact society. This spatial polarization decreases the thought of mixing with people and it will affect the democratic nature of the nation. If the formation of government policies will directly target to stop spatial polarization then some useful results can be expected. However, this removal of polarization is hard to execute, many people have to move from one place to another just to remove this segregation, which is not possible in such big country. This only can be controlled through policies in which social segregation will be strictly avoided. Similarly, for economic segregation, the government has to focus on the development of the low-income group and hence the gap will be maintained.

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