Slum-free cities of the Asian century: Postcolonial government and the project of inclusive growth

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The Asian Century can be understood as a historical conjuncture marked by new formations of economic hegemony and bold claims of Asian ascendancy. Situated at this historical moment, this essay examines a particular project of postcolonial government: inclusive growth. Taking up the example of India's recent Slum-free Cities policy, it shows how postcolonial government tackles the problem of urban poverty in order to make the Asian world-class city. Slum-free Cities marks a shift in city-making projects and indeed in the project of modernization—from slum evictions and demolitions to the integration of the poor into market rule. This essay provides an analysis of such emerging configurations of state, economy and poverty. Yet, such projects of inclusive growth are marked by paradoxes and limits, notably the complexity of transforming slum lands into legible and monetized property markets. These dilemmas are not new, and in fact, the archives of postcolonial government indicate repeated recitations of slum modernization. This longer history also indicates the need to view the Asian Century and its city-making projects, not as rupture or renaissance but instead as a citationary structure which enables distinctive teleologies of development and projects of postcolonial power.

Keywords: postcolonial, government, India, slum, development, poverty

> For sustainable urban growth, the inclusion of the poor in the formal planning process is, therefore, non-negotiable.
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> Delhi Declaration on Inclusive Urban Planning, Government of India, 2013

> The potential of Asia as method is this: using the idea of Asia as an imaginary anchoring point, societies in Asia can become each other's points of reference, so that the understanding of the self may be transformed, and subjectivity rebuilt. . . In this dialogue, Asia as method ceases to consider Asia as the object of analysis and becomes a method of transforming knowledge production.
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> Kuan-Hsing Chen (2010: 212, 216)

When is Asia?

In February 2013, as scholars at the National University of Singapore convened an academic symposium on the theme 'Advancing postcolonial geographies', leading to this special issue of the *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* (*SJTG*), so India's Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation convened an international conference of experts on the theme 'Inclusive Urban Planning'. Meant to inform India's 12th Five Year Plan, the conference ended with the issuance of the Delhi Declaration, a formal recognition of the urban poor and their 'needs . . . in terms of . . . spaces of livelihood, living and working as valid and crucial concerns of planning' (GOI, 2013). If the NUS symposium was a reflection on the legacies and futures of postcolonial theory, then the Delhi Declaration was an instantiation of postcolonial government and its spatio-temporal imaginations. In particular, it articulated a key project of postcolonial

government: inclusive growth. India's 12th Five Year Plan is itself framed around the theme 'Faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth'. The framing document notes:

> that India's 1.25 billion citizens have higher expectations about their future today, than they have ever had before. They have seen the economy grow much faster in the past 10 years than it did earlier, and deliver visible benefits to a large number of people. This has understandably raised the expectations of all sections, especially those who have benefited less. Our people are now much more aware of what is possible, and they will settle for no less (GOI, 2012: 1).

Here then is a mandate of inclusion closely linked to the hyper-temporality of economic growth. But this is not necessarily a generic narrative of growth and progress. Instead, it is constituted through, and constitutive of, the historical conjuncture that Arrighi (2009) has titled the New Asian Age, a shift of the epicentre of the global political economy from North America to East Asia. Indeed, the New Asian Age can be seen as one example of the rapid rearrangement of geographies of development in the twenty-first century. From economic ascendance in India and China to new transactions of aid and development across the global South, a reshuffling of the Bretton Woods global order is underway. Thus, it is worth keeping in mind that the 2013 Delhi Declaration was preceded, in March 2012, by another Delhi Summit, this one of the BRICS. As Prashad (2012: 224) notes, at this summit, leaders of BRICS states not only launched a critique of North Atlantic financial hegemony but also envisioned a new world order of development, notably one anchored by a Bank of the South, the BRICS version of the South American Banco Sur.

In this essay, I examine the renewal of development in the crucible of the Asian Century. I do so, by paying close attention to a distinctive theme of development, the making of the Asian world-class city. However, if previous scholarship, including my own, has examined the Asian world-class city as a site of dispossession and displacement (Bhan, 2009; Ghertner, 2011; Goldman, 2011; Roy, 2011), then here I am concerned with the project of inclusive growth, with how postcolonial government must ensure that the 'the poor man' has 'his value represented on paper' (De Soto in *Indian Express*, 2010). I suggest that such a project, while mobilizing familiar scripts of inclusion, marks a new effort to reconcile poverty and economic growth.

In a provocative essay, Gidwani and Reddy (2011: 1652–53, emphases original) argue that 'India's urban present . . . is a *post-development formation*', one in which the urban poor is '*superfluous*' to a regime of capitalist value and where 'neither the apparatuses of the state, nor the urban bourgeoisie seek this social engagement' with 'surplus humanity'. Post-development thought is itself a vast and heterogeneous field, ranging from the search for alternative development (Pieterse, 2000), to the deconstruction of the discourse that is Development (Escobar, 1995) to the charting of what Sidaway (2007: 355) has identified as the fractured geographies and 'boundary practices' of 'sub and transnational spaces, nodes, and networks'. In this essay, I am concerned with the specific meaning of post-development asserted by Gidwani and Reddy, that of a relationship between state, capital and poverty. I argue that the making of the Asian world-class city exceeds such readings of the end or lack of development. With this in mind, I focus on a recent urban policy in India, Slum-free Cities, or the Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY). My intention is not to evaluate this policy or analyse its nuanced workings. Indeed, such an analysis is impossible given the brief period of time that this policy has been in existence. Instead, I am interested in how Slum-free Cities reveals the spatio-temporal imaginations of postcolonial government. In particular, it reveals the paradoxes of inclusive growth as it is deployed to govern the megacity and its spaces of

poverty. An especially thorny paradox, as we will see, is that of property, of how to transform the complex ambiguities of informal property regimes into cadastral property and even more boldly into urban assets with globally legible value.

Such an analysis, in turn, contributes to ongoing debates in two fields of inquiry—in postcolonial studies, specifically subaltern studies, and in the efforts to think of 'Asia as method'. First, I argue that postcolonial theory must itself be much more attentive to how postcolonial government problematizes and governs subaltern subjects and spaces. Such a move is already signalled by Partha Chatterjee's recent reflection. Chatterjee (2012: 46) notes that the figure of the 'insurgent peasant' as 'mass-political subject', which was at the very heart of project of subaltern studies, 'needs to be redrawn'. In particular, Chatterjee (2012: 46–47) draws our attention to the 'deepening and widen-ing of the apparatuses of governmentality', to how 'the activities of the government have penetrated deep into the everyday lives of rural people', and to the 'constant tussles of different population groups with the authorities over the distribution of governmental services'. Chatterjee marks an important shift in the work of postcolonial theory: from the study of the subalternity as 'a general attribute of subordination' and thereby a 'politics of the people' (Guha, 1988: 35, 40) to an emphasis on governmentality. But Chatterjee's reflection stops short of two analytical moves. First, he is surprisingly silent on the matter of urban government. As has been the case with subaltern studies, it is peasant insurgency that animates a theory of politics. In such formulations, the urban masses cannot be imagined as the subject of history and thus come to be marked by a strange double subalternity. In this essay, following Paul Rabinow (1989: 76), I will argue that the terrain of the urban constitutes a distinctive rationality of government, a 'normative project for the ordering of the social milieu'. Slum-free Cities provides a glimpse of this rationality and its limits. Second, Chatterjee limits his conceptualization of politics as 'tussles' over 'governmental services'. But many other frames, including those that interpret the art of government as the locus of problematization and politics, are possible modes of postcolonial government, in par-ticular urban government. As a 'programme of government', Slum-free Cities is, as Rose and Miller (2010: 279) would argue, a 'problematizing activity', one in which the slum crystallizes, in both unique and generalizable ways, the problems and hopes of the New Asian Age. Such a normative project is not only about faster economic growth—Asia at the speed of the 9 per cent growth rate—but is also about the government of poverty, about what the Delhi Declaration imagines as inclusive cities. The Delhi Declaration reminds us that the government of poverty seeks to act upon the population that is surplus humanity. It reminds us that accumulation, and even dispossession, can proceed not only through superfluity or abandonment but also through paradigms of inclusive growth. In previous work I have termed such enactments poverty capitalism (Roy, 2010) and while poverty capitalism is not unique to the territory that is Asia, it is fully implicated in the performativity of an Asian world-class city that values and valorizes inclusion.

I have already suggested that the 2013 Delhi Declaration on Inclusive Urban Plan-ning is a moment in the historical conjuncture that is the New Asian Age, and specifi-cally the making of the Asian world-class city. In our work on global urbanism, Aihwa Ong and I designate the Asian world-class city as a claim to the future, an experiment to instantiate visions of the world in formation. And the Asian world-class city is inevitably produced through what Ong and I have analysed as the inter-referenced nature of Asian urbanism, where referents like Dubai, Shanghai and Singapore shimmer on the horizon (Roy & Ong, 2011). Needless to say, we do not mean Asia as a

geographical location or even as a set of circulations but rather as a set of citations, a structure of thought within which teleologies of development are referenced and revised. It is in this sense that we need to ask not where Asia is but rather *when* is Asia?

To think of Asia as the spatio-temporal imagination of postcolonial government is in keeping with a set of analytical efforts that seek to think of 'Asia as method' (Chen, 2010). Chen (2010: 1) argues that the turn toward Asia is a way of crafting a new analytical framework, a 'geocolonial historical materialism' which provides a more adequate understanding of contemporary cultural forms, practices, and institutions in the formerly colonized world'. However, while Chen (2010: 216) seeks to deploy Asia as a method of 'deimperialization', as a way of countering the 'West as method' and its dominant role in knowledge produce, I am concerned with Asia as an instantiation of the citationary structure of postcolonial government. Thus, in this paper, Asia functions as a sign of hegemony, not as an alternative reference. To do postcolonial theory from within such citationary structures is to not only 'decentre the North' (Mohan & Power, 2009: 7) but also to think genealogically about the historical conjuncture that is the Asian century.

Projects of postcolonial government: inclusive growth

> Then you will find out what it is you have to do for Indian people. In other words, we should stop, among so-called intellectuals, finding out what the people want. Go in there, find out how they are constituted.
>
> Hernando de Soto in *Indian Express*, 2010

If the start of the twenty-first century is characterized by a rearrangement of the established geographies of development and underdevelopment, then it is also marked by a new global commitment to poverty alleviation. Breaking with what Joseph Stiglitz (2003: 219) has critiqued as the 'market fundamentalism' of a previous era, global policies of the last decade have been concerned with human development. Manifested most tangibly in the Millennium Development Goals, human development can be viewed as a new philosophy, a new global social contract that makes possible the idea of 'the end of poverty' (Sachs, 2005). In such a global context, there is much discussion of the relationship between economic growth and poverty reduction. In India, these debates have taken the form of a new paradigm: inclusive growth. After all, despite drops in poverty, as Datt and Ravallion (2010: 59) note, 'India has the largest concentration of poor of any country'. India is the most obvious example of new geographies of global poverty: notably that the majority of the world's poor now live, not in the world's poorest countries, but instead in middle-income countries (Chandy & Gertz, 2011; Sumner, 2012).

Inclusive growth, as articulated in various discourses and agendas in India, is a vision of market-oriented inclusive growth. It is premised on the argument that the benefits of economic growth can be extended to 'currently excluded sections', often through reforms in 'governance and accountability' (Deloitte, 2011: 3). In particular, market-oriented inclusive growth is concerned with the role of the private sector in such efforts:

> There is a need for the public and the private sector in India to have a unified approach towards how they can extend, innovate, and collaborate in new ways to drive inclusive growth (Deloitte, 2011: 3).

There are at least two key components to market-oriented inclusive growth as it is being envisioned in India. The first is what, in previous work (Roy, 2010), I

have termed 'bottom billion capitalism', a stretching of market forces to include the world's billion people living under conditions of extreme poverty. Inspired by C.K. Prahalad's (2004) concept of the 'bottom of the pyramid', there is a great deal of interest nowadays in such types of markets. Led by Indian industry leaders, the 'Inclusive India' agenda seeks to 'leverage growth in a manner that will benefit people at the bottom of the pyramid' (Gopalakrishan quoted in *Business Standard*, 2011). Such also is the work of the India Inclusive Innovation Fund established by the National Innovation Council: 'to catalyse the creation of an ecosystem of enterprise, entrepreneurship, and venture capital, targeted at innovative solutions for the bottom of the pyramid' (National Innovation Council, n.d.). These 'bottom of the pyramid' ventures are meant to be win-win propositions with a 'focus on the problems of the poor, without compromising on economic success' (National Innovation Council, n.d.).

Central to market-oriented inclusive growth is the state's project of unique identification, *Aadhar*, spearheaded by Nandan Nilekani, a mogul of India's software industry. 'Inclusive growth is giving identity', Nilekani has argued, 'about giving every Indian an acknowledged existence and then letting them participate in the fruits of development' (*Economic Times*, 2010). For Nilekani, the *Aadhar* project marks a departure from previous state interventions in poverty:

> If 30 years back, we talked about *roti, kapda, aur makaan* (food, clothing and shelter) and in the last 10 years we have talked about *bijli, sadak, paani*, which is infrastructure (power, roads and water), then in the next 10 years, it is going to be about bank accounts, mobile numbers and *Aadhaar* (Nilekani, n.d.).

Indeed, *Aadhar* is meant to be the 'foundation' of 'rights and entitlements'—from access to state welfare programmes to financial inclusion. But it is also meant to provide the poor with what Nilekani (n.d.) frames as 'choice', to have choices as consumers, including as consumers of public services. As I will discuss later in this essay, Nilekani's conceptualization of the 'power of identity' bears striking resemblance to the ideas of Hernando de Soto and his arguments about granting legal identity to slums. Above all, these are a set of calculative practices meant to make poverty visible, and to thereby establish the foundations not only of social inclusion but also of a bottom billion capitalism able to capitalize the shadow economies of the poor.

The second component of market-oriented inclusive growth is governance and accountability. India's 11th Five Year Plan put forward the proposition that inclusion must go beyond poverty alleviation 'to encompass equality of opportunity' (GOI, 2007: 4). In particular, the plan emphasizes participation and empowerment through institutions of local democracy such as the panchayats. Similarly, the World Bank's 2006 *Development Policy Review*, which was focused on inclusive growth, emphasized not only core public services but also empowerment, specifically reforms that would create 'more effective systems of public accountability'. Put another way, the report concludes that 'to "fix the pipes", you must first "fix the institutions that fix the pipes" ' (World Bank, 2006: xv).

At the heart of these inclusive growth debates is the discovery of the urban question. In India, the era of liberalization has drawn new attention to the role of cities in economic growth. Dubbed by the McKinsey Global Institute as 'India's urban awakening', cities have been declared as 'central to India's economic future' and 'critical for inclusive growth' (McKinsey Global Institute, 2010: 14, 18). Indeed, statecraft in India has come to be quite centrally concerned with urban planning. Following Parnell

and Pieterse (2010: 146), such forms of government can be understood as the rescaling of the developmental state to the city scale. And most important, the work of producing the world-class city in India has relied heavily on models and referents that mark the Asian century and its miracles, from China's Special Economic Zones to Dubai's real-estate development to Singapore's meticulous urban planning (Roy & Ong, 2011).

Of course, the world-class city is itself a pastiche vision. In India, these forms of urban development follow a predictable formula of peri-urban elite enclaves of residence and leisure, economic zones to attract global capital, and civic campaigns to ensure spatial order in the city. And needless to say, the Indian 'world-class city' remains fiercely contested. From social movements organized against displacement to everyday blockades against squatter evictions and landgrabs, a new urban politics is afoot in India (Roy, 2011). But so is a new type of postcolonial government, one that positions urban infrastructure as central to the transformation of the Indian megacity into the Asian world-class city. Launched in 2005, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) embodies an ambitious approach to urban planning for economic growth, including a bold role for the central government in the urban arena. Focused on urban infrastructure, its key vision is 'reform urbanism', i.e. where urban infrastructure projects serve as the conduit for the liberalization of the economy. Such reforms have long been a part of infrastructure projects of multilateral and regional development banks. Now they are an essential ingredient of self-government. In the case of India, the JNNURM has introduced new models of financing, from municipal bond markets to user fees for urban services, as well as the liberalization of land and housing markets. In short, a national project of urban infrastructure has also been the endeavour to reform the postcolonial megacity.

It is worth noting that the geography of postcolonial rule is inevitably uneven. The postcolonial archives may be as difficult to mine as colonial archives but amidst them are whispers of rebellions, blockades, slowdowns and impasse. In West Bengal, the state government is refusing to levy the water tax that must accompany water infrastructure financed by the national urban renewal mission (*Indian Express*, 2011; *Tehelka*, 2011). In Tripura, the state government is able to levy property taxes on only 45 per cent rather than 85 per cent of households, thus leading to the withdrawal of urban renewal funds. From the margins of India, speaks an embattled local minister of urban development: 'The people have not been cooperating with the city administration in realization of tax and rents as per the guidelines of the Centre' (*The Shillong Times*, 2011). Indeed, 'the people' continue to subvert the mandates of postcolonial government and its projects of reform.

But the most ambitious articulation of the inclusive growth paradigm comes in the form of a recent extension of JNNURM: Slum-free Cities. While the JNNURM model already proposed the extension of 'basic urban services to the poor', the new policy, RAY calls for something more bold, the transformation of 250 Indian cities with an estimated 32 million people living in slums. On the one hand, Slum-free Cities signals what one of its main authors has titled a 'new deal for India's urban poor', or safety nets for the urban poor (Mathur, 2009). On the other hand, the policy seeks to transform slum land into urban assets, in other words, to initiate slum redevelopment. Slum-free Cities marks a decisive urban turn in India policymaking, one in which the governance of spaces and populations of urban poverty is a priority. It also marks a break with previous frames of world-class city making, which relied on the crude techniques of slum evictions and demolitions.

Governing the postcolonial megacity: slum futures

> Mr. De Soto's work suggests that the poor do have the tools to bring themselves out of poverty, but they simply lack the capability which can be given to them by according them property rights
> Kumari Selja, Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India, 2010

The term slum is an inadequate shorthand for the sheer heterogeneity of urban political economy: the diversity of informal and para-legal property arrangements, the dense economies of work and livelihood, and the complex formations of associational life and popular politics. If we recognize the slum not as defective or deviant, but rather as integral to the logic of urbanization, then of course it becomes evident that the slum, despite its inadequate nomenclature, signifies the global urban future of the world's urban majority. The crucial importance of India's recent Slum-free Cities endeavour is that it gives centrality to the slum in the making of urban futures. It also recognizes the exclusionary nature of Indian urbanization and urban planning:

> City master plans follow an exclusionary model that reserves land for housing for high and middle income groups, commercial, institutional, recreational and other uses, with no earmarking for Economically Weaker Sections and Low Income Groups. . . . Slums are an inevitable outcome of this deficiency in urban policy and planning (GOI, 2010: 8).

In this sense, Slum-free Cities, as a 'new deal for India's urban poor' (Mathur, 2009), signals a new welfare regime. It is the urban counterpart to India's rural welfare policies. Mathur (2009: 12) envisions this urban 'safety net' as including price subsidies for slum households for food and energy, employment schemes and conditional cash transfers. Not surprisingly, Slum-free Cities is being acknowledged, if not celebrated, by urban activists and critical scholars. As Bhan (2011) notes:

> RAY tries not to patronize the poor. It begins with their right to come to and be in the city as well as have shelter within it. It acknowledges the failure of the state in keeping its own commitments to housing the poor as well as not enabling the market to reach them. In many ways, RAY is an expression of a right to shelter we have refused to give to our fellow citizens even as information, education and health have been won.

But Slum-free Cities also embodies the stubborn contradictions of postcolonial government and its efforts to spatially implement inclusive growth. More a pronouncement than a policy (Sivaramakrishnan, 2012), Slum-free Cities makes evident at least two conceptual dilemmas that haunt the project of inclusive growth: the epistemology of poverty and the propriety of property.

The epistemology of poverty

If Slum-free Cities marks the historical conjuncture at which the terrain of urban poverty becomes the matter of postcolonial government, then it also entails a series of problems, including those of the visibility and calculability of urban poverty. An important part of the Slum-free Cities initiative is thus the effort to produce 'dataspace'—the mapping, surveying and documenting of slum lands through elaborate technologies, from satellite images to 'ground level spatial data' to slum surveys by nongovernmental organizations (GOI, 2010: 3). These endeavours to create what Gandy (2006: 372) has called 'governable entities' abound in the world of urban planning. What is interesting about Slum-free Cities is the particular epistemology of poverty which underlies its production of dataspace. Inspired by Hernando de Soto's framework of the 'mystery of

capital', Slum-free Cities views poverty as the lack of 'the process to represent property and create capital (de Soto, 2000: 7). It thus insists on a politics of visibility and recognition, that the 'the poor man' must have 'his value represented on paper' (de Soto in *Indian Express*, 2010). As is now well known and much discussed, de Soto claims that such forms of representation will allow the poor to convert 'dead capital' into 'liquid capital', thereby converting slums into assets.

Such an epistemology of poverty is a break with dominant understandings of slums in India, for example with a slew of Public Interest Litigation that has framed the slum as nuisance, as 'zones of incivility that violate normalized codes of urban conduct and appearance' (Bhan, 2009; Ghertner, 2011: 2; see also Chaturvedi & Gidwani, 2011). But such an epistemology of poverty is also in keeping with the reform urbanism that is now prevalent in India. For example, the JNNURM pivots on the idea of the 'citizen as stakeholder', a model that 'equates participation with financial contributions to new infrastructure investments' (Ranganathan *et al.*, 2009: 57).

These epistemologies of poverty—of the poor as heroic entrepreneur, able to convert slum lands into assets of global value, or of the poor as financial stakeholder in urban infrastructure—lie at the very heart of postcolonial government and the project of inclusive growth. They valorize the 'people's economy', and celebrate economies of poverty as economies of entrepreneurship. In sharp contrast to conceptualizations of poverty concerned with exploitation, dispossession and spatial inequality, this epistemology of poverty is a vision of what a recent architectural exhibition described as 'jugaad urbanism', a celebration of the brilliant bricolage of the urban poor, a display of the 'inspired, duct-taped ingenuity' of slums (The Center for Architecture, 2011). Following Sparke (2002) who draws upon the work of Mitchell (1991), such ways of seeing poverty must be understood as a form of 'enframing'.

Slum-free Cities then can be understood as part of a new paradigm of inclusive growth, which in turn is part of the discursive frames of the Asian century and its world-class cities. As epitomized by the Delhi Declaration, such forms of government seek to integrate rather than render surplus, marginal populations. They thus recast the relationship between state and subject, capital and poverty. In their boldest articulations, they seek to construct what, in previous work, I have called 'poverty markets' (Roy, 2012). However, bottom billion capitalism is always under construction, never guaranteed. It is in this sense that Slum-free Cities is an impossible project, a 'stark utopia' to borrow a term from Polanyi (2001).

The propriety of property

Slum-free Cities seeks to transform slum land into urban assets. To do so it conjures up instruments of reform already introduced by the JNNURM. For example, it mandates that each state in the Indian federation has to devise a Slum-free Plan of Action which is 'expected to give primacy to a Public-Private-Partnership model that would enable it to cross-subsidise through Floor Space Index and land use concessions as much of the slum redevelopment as possible' (GOI, 2010: 1). At the core of these slum redevelopment plans is a radical idea: the assignment of legal title to slum-dwellers. In fact, RAY calls for legal title to be conferred 'either on the woman or jointly with the main male householder' (GOI, 2010: 11). Such a declaration of security of tenure for the urban poor is crucial, especially in India where slum evictions and demolitions have been commonplace. But as is the case with the paradigm of inclusive growth, property titles for slum-dwellers are meant to enact social inclusion as well as create new markets. Inspired by de Soto, India's then Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, in

a talk titled 'Inclusive paradigms for inclusive growth' announced Slum-free Cities by posing the following question: 'How do we create a process by which the poor can convert capital from the extra-legal to the legal sphere and in so doing, contribute to the GDP at the bottom of the pyramid' (Selja, 2010)? Thus India's first urban social protection policy is also an endeavour to title and revalue property, and security of tenure in newly visible slum lands becomes the basis of slum redevelopment. In short, Slum-free Cities consolidates what Ghertner (2011), in describing the aesthetic order of urbanism in India, has called the 'propriety of property'. Ghertner (2011: 1167) describes how constructions of 'property bearing and middle class selfhood', in turn defined as the ability to exclude nuisance, are central to the construction of the Asian 'world-class' cityness.

What then is property? Following Mitchell (2002: 11), property can be understood as depending on a 'set of rules and sanctions that determine an individual's power to dispose of an object in the act of exchange'. But, keeping in mind the slums of India, Bhan (2011) asks:

> What is a 'property right'? Is it ownership? A right to sell and buy? A title? Is it the right to use? The right not to be evicted? Is the right necessarily individual? Can be it communal, co-operative, or common? What rights does one have to land that is 'public'? How are 'property rights' related to security of tenure—the ability (in many ways as important to the poor as ownership) of being able to stay in place?

Bhan's questions signify the radical ambiguities that attend the shadow economies of the poor and slum lands in particular. Ethnographic research demonstrates that the term 'slum' masks a dizzying complexity of property and tenure arrangements which exist in Indian cities, what Benjamin (2008) has called 'occupancy urbanism', the sheer occupation of the city by non-elite groups. Urban planning has a unique role to play in such forms of occupancy urbanism. In the case of Kolkata, a regime of regulatory ambiguity, what I have termed 'unmapping', allows urban informal settlements to exist and also persist in a state of uncertainty and vulnerability (Roy, 2003). Such regulatory ambiguity is not a case of state failure or market failure—it is a deliberate tool of spatial management used by various arms of the state in collaboration with market actors.

In fact, such markets of urban informality are not limited to the domain of poverty. Indian cities, and indeed cities in many world-regions, are shaped by multiple informalities, including elite informality and subaltern informality. Elite informality, from farmhouses to commercial developments, are no more legal than the shantytowns of the poor. But as the encroachments of the rich, they are expressions of class power and can thus command infrastructure, services and legitimacy in a way that marks them as substantially different from the landscape of slums. It is thus that, writing in the context of Sao Paulo, Brazil, Holston notes that while it may seem obvious and apparent that the urban poor are engaged in an informal and illegal occupation of land, much of the city itself is occupied through the 'misrule of law': 'In both the wealthiest and the poorest of Brazilian families we find legal landholdings that are at base legalized usurpations' (Holston, 2007: 207).

These then are the paradoxes of Slum-free Cities, and indeed of inclusive growth as a project of postcolonial government. RAY is a policy that seeks to transform urban land, with its multiplicity of occupancy and ownership, into cadastral property, and to then transform cadastral property into a commodity with globally legible value. This task of 'making land into private property', as Li (2007: 98) describes it in relation to agrarian development in Indonesia, is not new. It must be understood genealogically, a project

which I cannot undertake in this paper. Let me only signal that such a genealogy would require paying attention to the double transformation I have already outlined, land to private property and property to commodity. Such a genealogy also requires attention to the multiple and recurring historical moments at which such transformations occur. Thus, at the 'Advancing postcolonial geographies' symposium for which this paper was prepared, Mark Jackson posed a brilliant provocation of Slum-free Cities: 'what is its relationship to the Permanent Settlement of 1793?' Jackson's question, unanswered in this essay, reminds us of previous efforts to craft property settlements, to settle the question of rule and governance by creating systems of cadastral property. It thereby forces us to consider what Mitchell (2002: 11) has described as the power of property to appear as an abstraction, to stand not on particular claims and histories but instead 'on principles true in every country', Mitchell's citation of a British colonial administrator.

The issue of property thus leads us to questions that cannot be broached by the epistemology of poverty on which postcolonial government rests: what is the relationship between urban planning and the sanctified 'misrule of law'? Who is authorized—by urban planning—to (mis)use the law in such ways to declare property a law and capitalize its exchange as a commodity? Slum-free Cities and the broader paradigm of inclusive growth cannot accommodate such questions. But nor can they avoid them.

A footnote may illuminate this dilemma. As the *SJTG* convened the symposium on postcolonialism and geography, so the Government of India, in partnership with the Department for International Development, UK, convened a conference on inclusive urban planning. It was at this conference that the Delhi Declaration was issued. I chose the Singapore symposium over the conference in Delhi, driven by my desire to participate in the project of postcolonial theory rather than in that of postcolonial government. But I wrote an essay for the Government of India on the theme of the inclusive city. A few weeks later, as I signed the contract for publication, I noticed a paragraph describing the mission of inclusive urban planning. Only one academic citation marked the mission: to address the 'sharp social divisions that are starkly etched in a landscape of bourgeois enclaves and slums' (Roy, 2009). I have already noted that inclusive growth, with its epistemology of poverty and its propriety of property, cannot address such sharp social divisions. And yet such is its ambitious aspiration. The citation comes from one of my essays, 'Why India cannot plan its cities' (Roy, 2009), which has travelled in ways I never anticipated. This too is part of the citationary structure of postcolonial government. It reminds us that the postcolonial critic is necessarily implicated in the renewal of development that marks the New Asian Age. Here, I depart from Chen (2010: 277) who hopes to dissolve the troubled postcolonial figure of 'native informant' through inter-Asian ontologies and epistemologies. Interpellated in the interstices of postcolonialism and Asia, I cannot share in that hope.

Pre-histories of postcolonialism

Across the spectrum of men's problems today, obviously war is the most horrible. But our attention here is focused on a problem that does not rank far behind in what it does to aggravate and decimate the lives of men. I speak, of course, of our theme: the squalor in which people live in every part of the world as so many of them flock into urban areas . . . The United States is now committed as never before in its history to putting this question first among domestic priorities.

Robert Weaver, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development,
'A new commitment to the world's urban problems', Pittsburgh, 1966

One of the significant contributions of postcolonial theory has been to uncover the geohistorical conditions of knowledge production. If Chakrabarty (2000) insists on the need to 'provincialize Europe', then the deployment of Asia also requires critical reflexivity. While Arrighi (2009) would have us consider an Asian renaissance, in this essay, I have argued that we must instead examine the paradoxes that attend projects of rule and reform in the era of the Asian world-class city. The frictions of the slum, particularly of the slum as property, indicate the limits of inclusive growth, especially as it comes to be spatially implemented in the megacity. Indeed, I would suggest that Arrighi's framing of the New Asian Age consolidates, rather than disrupts, the hegemonic hyper-futures that are already unfolding in the Asian powerhouses, from India to China. Against such temporal imaginations, it is necessary to deploy genealogical methods to trace other histories. With this in mind, I conclude this essay with a story from the archives of development. In unusual fashion, the story travels away from Asia to the American 1960s. My intention is three-fold. First, I seek to provincialize narratives of the Asian century by revealing a glimpse of the constitution of Asian urban planning in the context of American imperialism. Following Chen (2010: x), I am interested in the entanglements of (post)colonial nationalism, Cold War politics and imperialism. Asia, Chen suggests, was a 'mediating site' for such forces and movements. Second, to pay attention to American imperialism is to reject Arrighi's argument that the Asian renaissance is accompanied by the terminal crisis of American hegemony. Asia as citation may very well obscure how the rearrangement and renewal of both development and American militarism exist in partnership. Third, this closing story is a call for postcolonial theory to reconsider its archives. Long concerned with the relationship between subaltern subject and archive, postcolonial theory has too often ignored the archives of what Rabinow (1989) calls 'middling modernism'. Slum-free Cities, at once a recitation of ever-present templates of modernization and a rehearsal of new epistemologies of market rule, reminds us of the need to study the technocracies of development and the interpellated subjects who serve as interlocutors of postcolonial aspiration and ambition. This closing story is a glimpse of such interpellated subjects.

The mid-1960s were a tumultuous time in America. A growing anxiety about racialized violence in American cities conjoined with fear of wars of insurgency in the global South. As the Vietnam War intensified, and as ghetto rebellions exploded in Cleveland, Detroit and Los Angeles, so a series of policies and programmes yoked the problems of poverty and security and devised new strategies of social reform and pacification. From the invention of community development as a field of practice in American cities to counterinsurgency efforts abroad which were concerned with 'defensive modernization', mainly the stemming of rural-urban migration, these programmes of government were inevitably concerned with the urban question. Indeed, with the formation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (henceforth HUD) as one of President Johnson's Great Society interventions, the urban question came to be defined in global terms. Johnson appointed a plethora of taskforces to take up the matter of the urban crisis. The most influential of these, the 1966 President's Task Force on Cities, chaired by Paul Ylvisaker of the Ford Foundation, diagnosed the crisis of American cities as that of racial inequality and segregation. Lesser known are a series of reports, taskforces and conferences organized by HUD to define and shape a global agenda of 'urban problems'. In a 1965 report to Johnson, for example, policy makers at HUD argued that 'cities all over the world are in deep trouble'. In language eerily reminiscent of today's talk of megacities, the report (HUD, 1965: 6), presented the urban crisis as the 'unmanageable, unattractive giant cities, suffering from slums and squalor,

poor facilities and community services, strangling traffic, and administrative chaos'. In 1967, HUD partnered with USAID to organize the 'Pacific Conference on Urban Growth'. Held in Honolulu, the conference did not mention the escalating war in Vietnam and instead focused on a global urban crisis and the role of the US in addressing such a crisis. As the Secretary of HUD, Robert Weaver, had already outlined in a 1966 speech, '[a] new commitment to the world's urban problems' was underway. Rather ambitiously, Weaver called for a 'a new theory of urban problem-solving', and suggested that American experiments with urban planning, such as the Model Cities programme, were demonstration projects of 'what can be done in neglected slum neighborhoods'. Not surprisingly Weaver (1966) saw Saigon as the ideal site of the extension of such experiments, the place where Johnson's mandate for a 'common dedication' to the 'rehabilitation and development of Vietnam' could be implemented.

But the Pacific Conference on Urban Growth did not necessarily turn out this way. While US officials repeatedly detailed the new programmes and policies of the Great Society and made a case for their application to Asian urban development, the delegates at the conference from various parts of Asia were not convinced with such a framework. Indeed, led by Hahn-Been Lee, the Korean delegate and conference moderator, the delegates rejected the American definition of a global urban crisis. Lee himself defined the city as 'the most important "natural" device whereby "modernization" takes place in any society or country', and thus argued that urbanization was essential for economic growth and development (HUD, 1967: 3). The conference concluded on a quite different note than that sounded by its American conveners:

> . . . . The city itself has come to be regarded as an enemy. But this is, we are beginning to emphasize, a mistaken view . . . The problems are incidental to economic progress. . . . It may well be that rural migration, is overall, a constructive force. It may develop that urban growth does not need to be restrained, so much as encouraged (HUD, 1967).

Indeed, the Pacific Conference on Urban Growth became the occasion to put forward diverse and incommensurable ideas, those that exceeded and defied the American narrative of crisis and pacification. Prem Krishen, delegate for India, thus called for the overhaul of urban land policies. Over 40 years prior to the launch of Slum-free Cities, he argued that it was necessary to consider the fate of 'economically disadvantaged victims of urbanization' and to replace 'stringent eviction laws' with the 'provision of basic necessities' for squatters. At the same time, he argued that 'maximum scope' had to be given to 'beneficial private sector urban development by eliminating or loosening obsolete, rigid zoning and building laws' (Krishen, 1967: 3–4). Krishen's presentation at the conference is a profound moment of postcolonialism. He, like the other delegates, is at once complicit in and rebellious against the project of American imperialism. The archives of complicity are complex. I cannot speculate as to why these Asian delegates, many of ministerial rank, were silent about the 'colonial present' that formed the backdrop to the 1967 conference. But what is evident is that the rebellion took place not in the name of anti-imperialism but rather under the sign of postcolonial government. The city, the overcrowded city of poverty and chaos, was recovered as the vehicle of economic growth and modernization. The contradictions that haunt Slum-free Cities also accompany this recuperation. Krishen seeks to find a place for rural migrants in the city. But he is eager to enable the unfettered capitalization of urban land.

Of course, Krishen's performance at the Pacific Conference on Urban Growth is not an originary moment. If, following Sundaram (2012: 5) we are to see the 'slum as archive'—and I mean it here as an archive of postcolonial government—then, in the

Indian context, it becomes evident that the modernizers of the 1950s were asking similar questions: 'how can we articulate a just city, with low cost public housing for the poor, unencumbered by speculation and developer capitalism?' Sundaram reads this question from the 1950s as the 'aporias of the social city'. Indeed, it can be read as the aporias of postcolonial government. In the time of the Asian Century, as urban futures are imagined as Asian futures, such aporias are being reformatted in new paradigms of hegemony and a new politics of poverty. The slum is once again the terrain of government. As postcolonial geography must tackle colonial complicity so it must tackle the mass dreams of development.

Acknowledgements

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