

Babu's Camelot

Amaravati and the Emerging Capitalist Dynamics in 'New' Andhra Pradesh

VAMSI VAKULABHARANAM, N PURENDRA PRASAD

Three key dynamics have come to the fore in the fresh cycle of capitalism that is unfolding in the new state of Andhra Pradesh. First, capitalist accumulation is happening with a weak articulation and incorporation of labour. Second, capitalist development is being visualised in a city-centric paradigm with a weak vision of integrating the hinterlands. Third, these two dynamics are perceived by the state and the ruling elite to have little opposition, a kind of thesis with a weak antithesis. This paper provides a critique of these emerging dynamics in the hope of imagining a more inclusive Andhra Pradesh.

Don't let it be forgot/That once there was a spot/For one brief shining moment/That was known as Camelot!

— King Arthur in the movie, *Camelot*.

Our Chief Minister says that we will become lazy if we are paid adequate compensation. Our houses are here and our children go to schools here. We do not own land, so we cannot gain from the construction of the new capital; there is no work for us now; we are not suited to do construction work. Where can we go now, seeking work?

— A Dalit landless agricultural woman worker in one of the villages of the proposed capital city of Amaravati.

As the two breakaway states of Telangana and the residual Andhra Pradesh (AP) are vigorously unleashing fresh bouts of capitalist accumulation since their formation in June 2014, it is important to understand the specific dynamics that are coming to the fore in each region. In this study, we analyse the specific form of capitalism, that is emerging in AP. In an era when global capitalism has been facing deep crises (along stability, inequality and sustainability axes), we investigate whether the new proposed capital city of Amaravati addresses any of these imperatives, setting an example for future urban development in India and elsewhere.

Imagining a Mega World-class City

The Expert Committee on the New Capital for Andhra Pradesh headed by (late) K C Sivaramakrishnan was constituted by the then central government under Congress-led United Progressive Alliance in March 2014. The committee came up with an idea of distributed development of the different functions of capital (GOI 2014). Instead of following the 19th century and 20th century paradigm of creating large cities that utilise economies of scale and agglomeration, the committee suggested a model of decentralisation.

Given the rapid advances made in the fields of communication and transport over the last three–four decades, a decentralised model of capital city in a state like AP would make tremendous sense in achieving several objectives. First, the political and administrative functions (legislature, secretariat, high court, and so forth) of the capital city can be accommodated within a zone of less than 500 acres in some convenient location. Second, by paying special attention to the geological specificities of different zones, and propensities for natural disasters (like cyclones) in setting up different economic activities and their overseeing administrative apparatus, the paradigm of distributed development would address questions surrounding climate

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Vamsi Vakulabharanam (vamsi@umass.edu) teaches economics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. N Purendra Prasad (purendra.prasad@gmail.com) teaches sociology at the University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad.

change and sustainability. Third, by spatially dispersing different classes of economic activities, this paradigm would address questions surrounding regional/spatial inequality (a consideration that ought to be paramount given the context, discourse and the surrounding rhetoric of the break-up of united AP in 2014). Fourth, by directly addressing the question of jobs and employment in all the subregions, it would lead to a path of lower inequality/inclusive development. This would have been an ecumenical intervention in the increasingly troubled space of global capitalism.

Instead, the Chandrababu Naidu-led AP government chose to ignore this wisdom in favour of building a highly centralised “world-class” city. This is, purportedly, also meant to be a fitting response to the loss of Hyderabad for the elite of new AP. The proposed new capital city of AP, Amaravati, is going to be located in a sprawling area of more than 50,000 acres, comprising land from 29 villages on the banks of Krishna river between Vijayawada and Guntur. Apart from being conceived as perhaps one of the largest planned cities in independent India, it is also the most expensive one, and the scale of conversion of fertile agricultural land is unprecedented. Varied considerations such as water availability, central geographical location, caste composition in the proposed area, having a glamorous waterfront, and even *vaastu* seems to have played a key role in the final decision of locating the capital city in this region. Considerations such as sustainability, lower inequality, and greater social (including regional) equity seem to have been largely ignored.

Given little or no declared support from the central government,¹ and having no access to surplus finances, the AP government has been aggressively seeking investments from foreign investors in East and South East Asia—Singapore, China, Japan, and Malaysia among others. The strategy for financing the capital city seems to be—on the one hand, acquire/pool land from farmers, and on the other, attract capitalist investors by promising a long-term lease of huge chunks of this accumulated land. The government signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Singapore government, which in turn, subcontracted the preparation of the master plan to two private firms—Surbana International Consultants and Jurong Consultants.² These private consultants have proposed three master plans—capital region (7,068 sq km), capital city (217 sq km) and seed development (120 sq km).³

Subsequently, the AP government went ahead with the process of identifying a master developer to build Amaravati. Accordingly, the government approved two Singapore companies (Ascendas-Singbridge and Sembcorp) to form a consortium for this purpose in June 2016. The Singapore government has a stake of 74.5% in the consortium. The consortium has offered a 42% stake in Amaravati Development Company, a special purpose vehicle (SPV), of the AP government. The state government tried to implement the Swiss Challenge⁴ method to identify a developer to build the city. The master developer would be responsible for developing 684 sq km or around 40% of the core capital area. The state government will hand over 1,691 acres to the master developer in three phases. Protests

took place opposing the Swiss Challenge method and then a writ petition was filed in the high court. The opposition was on the grounds that this method lacks transparency,⁵ helps favour a particular company, and creates scope for corruption. In a recent judgment, on 12 September 2016, the AP High Court has stayed the Swiss Challenge method (Narayan 2016).

This whole strategy of the state and the elite, and the processes that are unfolding, as we describe in detail, can be best understood as an attempt to unlock three interrelated dynamics—(i) capital accumulation with a weak incorporation of labour, (ii) city-centred cores with weak ties to hinterlands, and (iii) a thesis (consisting of (i) and (ii)) with a weak anti-thesis (in terms of a concerted opposition).⁶

Capital Accumulations with a Weak Incorporation of Labour

At the outset, some basic theory needs recapitulation. There have been three kinds of capital in history, across different contexts (Marx 1971a, 1971b). Two of these, merchant and moneylending capital, do not usually deal with productive labour directly, and are therefore, termed as unproductive capital. The surplus/profit that accrues to the merchant is already present in the commodity that is produced in a labour process that the merchant may or may not directly control. Moneylending capital is the kind where there is no involvement with either commodities or labour. In the eyes of moneylending capital, money simply becomes more money.

Apart from financial capital (for example, securities markets, banks) of various kinds, speculative capital in real estate also belongs to this category, where land becomes equivalent to a mere piece of paper that is transacted, yielding monetary gains to this class of capitalists. Here too, however, the surplus that is obtained by this kind of capital is, in the end, indirectly linked to extraction of surplus labour. When the production of surplus (present or future) is detached and significantly lags behind the gains (in terms of asset price increases) that accrue to financial capital, crises could result. An example is the sub-prime crisis of 2008 that began in the United States (US), but then reverberated across the world.

The third kind is productive capital that accumulates based on surplus labour/value that is directly appropriated from workers. This kind (which became dominant in Britain in the late 18th century), although directly exploiting labour, does have the potential to enhance employment and wages for certain periods of time (such as the period between 1945 and 1973 in the US and other advanced capitalist countries), depending on the nature of the overall dynamics in the system.

As is well-understood now (Vakulabharanam and Motiram 2014), rapid capital accumulation in the united AP took off in the 1970s and 1980s from the three deltaic regions of Godavari, Krishna and Penna.⁷ Capitalists of agrarian origin emerged from these regions and shifted predominantly to the capital city of Hyderabad (which offered no significant barriers to their entry at that time). Rayalaseema (Reddies) too contributed one section of the capitalist class in AP, primarily emerging from state contracts and extraction of mineral resources. The

new capitalist class was not entirely unproductive (although this is an undeniable facet of this class) in its accumulation dynamics and set up various productive ventures that appropriated labour directly from workers who hailed from hinterlands in all the three regions (Telangana, Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra). Especially after 2004 or so, rapid accumulation was based on real estate speculation and mineral extraction, apart from fast growing productive ventures such as education and healthcare in the private sector.

After the formation of two separate states, residual AP has begun to excessively privilege unproductive capital accumulation, primarily of the second kind, that is, moneylending and speculation in real estate. This can be gleaned not only from Amaravati, but also from all the 13 districts. As we argue in detail later, the new phenomenon seems to be one in which no place exists for labour even in the imagination of the new accumulators. It would seem that residual AP has entered a phase of post-productive capitalism. We believe that the state of tattered and fragmented labour of Anantapur (a process that has been heightened in the last decade or so) in particular holds a mirror to the future of labour more generally in Amaravati and elsewhere in AP. What then are the precise dynamics of accumulation that are being pushed in the new AP?

The primary dynamic of accumulation seems to be one of acquiring land through one strategy or the other. This involves displacement of farmers, agricultural (local and migrant) workers and tenant farmers. Displacement does not (in the minds of the accumulators) have the other dimension of primitive accumulation as Marx discussed in the context of England, that is, creation of a working class that does not own the means of production, whose labour is crucial for capitalist accumulation of a productive kind. We can raise the question of whether this sort of an accumulation is sustainable, that is, can capital accumulation go on forever without a widespread incorporation of labour? What happens to the displaced labour? How can a society of accumulators reproduce itself, while labour is left in tatters? What are the implications of this model for inequality, and consequently, for various socio-economic crises? As of now, these issues do not seem to be of concern either to the state or to the accumulators.

Gathering Land and Dispensing with Labour in Amaravati

Gathering land–land ‘pooling’: In 2015, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government at the centre tried unsuccessfully to amend the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFTLARRA). However, the union government has encouraged the states to draft and pass their own laws for land acquisition and get them approved by the central government (Ramesh and Khan 2016). Following this unambiguous official sanction, the Tamil Nadu and Gujarat governments have moved ahead with their amendments. Telangana government came up with an order (GO 123) for acquiring

lands from farmers to build Mallanna Sagar Irrigation Project in Medak district.⁸ These laws allow for the acquisition of land in the states without having to satisfy any of the crucial safeguards built into the RFTLARRA, 2013 such as the right to consent, social impact assessment, livelihood rights of affected people, and so forth.

The 2013 act makes it mandatory to hold public consultations through gram sabhas (village councils) to acquire land. The act has a provision that each village panchayat (village government) has to pass a resolution with the mandatory consent of at least 75% of the members of the gram sabha. Realising that the land acquisition process may result in a huge controversy, given that a large majority of landowners (90%) are peasants who own small amounts of land (less than five acres per household), the AP government took a decision to procure land through the method of land pooling.⁹ In land pooling, individual farmers agree voluntarily to part with their land by entering into an agreement with a single entity, in this case, the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA). Paradoxically, CRDA,¹⁰ which has been given absolute power to acquire, sell, transfer, grant licence to, and alienate land, was created by the AP government without any consent from the village panchayats. CRDA announced that it had procured 31,000 acres between October 2014 and August 2015. This seemed puzzling to a lot of observers across the country. Since there is a preponderance of small farmers (as we discussed above) in these 29 villages, how was this operation so painless and successful?

First, *metta* (dry land) farmers voluntarily agreed to give land under the Land Pooling Scheme (LPS) as the price of allotted space promised by the government in the planned city in lieu of the lost agricultural land was higher than their previous land price (CRDA 2014). However, a good number of *metta* small farmers and petty traders with small parcels of land were worried about meeting their daily household expenditures and debts they owed to moneylenders. Sensing this issue, the AP government made a provision that landowners be allowed to sell their land deeds to any outside party at market rates even after agreeing to part their land under LPS. This particular decision accelerated the process of land pooling. As most of these buyers were closely linked to the political class, the government was able to facilitate and quickly wrap up the process of registration.

Second, large absentee landowners and non-cultivating resident landowners perceived the development of the capital city as a major economic opportunity. Some of the key respondents that we discussed with said that, since their families had diversified into urban occupations, there was tremendous pressure from their own family members (in particular, non-resident Indians) to participate in land pooling. These farmers were, in any case, holding on to land in anticipation of higher land prices. So, this class of farmers did not see land pooling as contradicting their economic interests, rather they visualised higher stakes in the development of the capital city. In agreeing to give land under LPS, they tried to negotiate favourable terms with the government, for example, assurance that their

commercial or residential plot will be in a prime location in the developed city.

Third, persuasion through caste networks was an important strategy. The landowners in 15 out of the 29 villages were predominantly from the Kamma caste, although there were a significant number of people belonging to Kapu caste. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government was able to persuade the landowners in these 15 villages through social (caste, kinship), economic (compensation package), and political (party) networks by way of making ministers, members of the legislative assembly and state bureaucracy camp in the villages for several days.

Fourth, where persuasion through economic or caste means was not successful, the state resorted to arm-twisting tactics. During the period, January to March 2015, when land pooling was at its peak, the state planted armed police camps in recalcitrant villages and communities. Informally, rumours were spread that refusal to pool land would result in land acquisition creating fear and anxiety among resisting farmers. Farmers of assigned landholdings¹¹ were oppositional too. For those assigned landholdings for which the ownership records were not available, there was considerable insecurity. Where ownership was clear, the residential space in lieu of every acre foregone was set at 200 square yards (in the new city), less for assignees compared to other landowners. The commercial space that they would get is also half that given to regular landowners in the case of dry land and 100 square yards less in the case of wet land. The state, in the name of “social enumeration” of assignees, considerably delayed identifying the concerned landowners. Discussion with political activists revealed that this delay in identifying the assignees was a deliberate tactic on part of the government to ensure that these assignees sold their lands.

Dispensing with labour: What happens to the small farmers, assignees without clear titles, tenants and landless workers, artisans and petty traders after land pooling?

First, a small proportion of farmers quickly reinvested the money they got from the lands they sold in the capital city region in the neighbouring districts. However, a large majority of these farmers has not resorted to this, and they are not clear about how their labour would be useful in the emerging new economy.

Second, the estimates from Tulluru mandal (a key area for the capital city) alone indicate that there are about 30,000 tenants, 60,000 agricultural workers, and several traditional craftsmen, non-agricultural workers, petty traders, while landowners are about 5,000. Most of the workers and tenants belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC).

The landowners got a reasonable compensation package, but the landless agricultural workers are promised a mere amount of ₹2,500 per household per month. On average, agricultural workers—male members earn ₹12,000 and women ₹8,000 per month in this region. Landless Dalit women workers are resigned to the idea that their lives will change forever.

Tenants from this region have faced intense problems. Discussions with them revealed that when they entered and started competing outside the capital city region, the lease price of land went up by 20%. This is not surprising given the fact that there is a vastly increased rate of tenancy (75% and more) in coastal Andhra region over the last decade or so. The vulnerability of tenants is evident from the fact that all the five reported suicides in Guntur district in the month of September 2015 were those of tenants.

Promise of employment and the future of labour: The AP government has made several announcements about the creation of substantial employment opportunities in the new capital. The official master plan document promises that “effective strategies for employment will be devised to create a variety of sustainable jobs.” The plan proposes smart infrastructure solutions along with smart mobility for creating a world-class central business district. The master plan also talks about creating 6,35,000 jobs by 2050 without spelling out how these jobs will come about (Ang Chit Sin et al 2015). The only concrete employment option that has been spelt out in the document refers to capitalising on the key tourist attractions: on river Krishna, the scenic islands (riverbed tourism), historic Undavalli caves, Kanaka Durga temple, Amaravati Buddha statue, Kondapalli fort, and so forth. Even if the promises are delivered, these jobs are not going to be helpful for the displaced workers of Amaravati region, but will be beneficial to a small class of professional workers.

The government documents say that all displaced workers will be “reskilled” in order to accommodate them in the proposed industries of the new city and the region. The AP Skill Development Corporation (APSDC) will be established to reskill the workers. However, previous studies in city expansion projects elsewhere in India indicate that only a small proportion (less than 5%) of displaced workers are re-employed (Levien 2015; Seethalakshmi 2009). The most likely scenario is that workers (small farmers, tenants, landless and non-agricultural workers) will be released into the larger world, leaving their labour up for grabs, and as targets of intense exploitation in some unknown quarter of the world outside Amaravati.

Land acquisition and destruction of labour in Andhra districts: We visited Anantapur district in the Rayalaseema region of AP to get a sense of how working people there perceive the emergence of the new capital in Amaravati. We visited a Dalit colony, a Lambada (Sugali) Thanda (hamlet) and a small-farming community. The overwhelming response that we received is that Amaravati is of no use to the working people in the peripheries of new AP. Even as billions of dollars will be invested in the construction of the new capital, a consequent severe shortage of resources to fulfil basic needs (for example, water) would emerge in Anantapur and other less favoured districts in AP and this will result in widespread destruction of lives and livelihoods of labouring individuals. Evidence supporting this claim is already present

in the Hindupur–Lepakshi region (which is about 100 km from Bengaluru airport), where several bouts of land acquisition have occurred in the last 10 years (during the Y S Rajasekhara Reddy regime).

Land acquisition by the state for special economic zones (SEZs) or direct private acquisition has meant that workers have lost their livelihoods, and their labour has become scattered in unprecedented ways. Several poor workers and marginal farmers plant crops without the hope of harvesting it (in the context of continuous drought), they labour in Bengaluru in low paying and insecure jobs with highly inadequate housing, they gather scattered skills such as weaving or carpentry to put together a minimum income, and sometimes even pledge their sexual labour for basic survival. In all likelihood, this sort of fragmentation of labour is symptomatic of a deeper set of capitalist dynamics that were put in motion over the last two decades, and that will only continue with renewed vigour in new AP.

We also visited a few field sites¹² in Visakhapatnam district in north coastal Andhra. This region also witnessed large scale land acquisition and displacement due to the setting up of SEZs, ports (for example, Gangavaram) and other projects in the last 15 years. The field data indicated that accumulation of capital is going on without incorporating labour into decent employment in this region. Land has been acquired with a promise of providing employment not only to displaced people, but all categories of workers in the region. As soon as the units started functioning, highly limited regular employment is provided for skilled and semi-skilled jobs, while a large proportion of the workforce is recruited as contract or casual labour. Moreover, most of the workers are recruited from outside the region whether it is casual labour or highly skilled jobs. This is because accumulators see local workers as potential threats or as a countervailing force that may unionise, make demands for regularising their jobs, higher compensation, better work conditions and safeguarding their local environment.

The AP government has set up a Capital City Development and Management Company (CCDMC) in order to mobilise investments from foreign players in the coming decades not only in Amaravati, but also in other regions of the state. The strategy to attract capital is that CCDMC will have the power to grant 99-year leases on acquired land in Amaravati and elsewhere for public–private or purely private ventures. In order to achieve this objective, the AP government is planning to acquire one lakh acre land in every district. In effect, the AP government has restructured itself as a land broker. These processes resonate with Michael Levien’s (2015) observations that in India there is a fundamental shift from a regime of dispossession where the state acquires land in the name of development to a new regime, where dispossession happens primarily for the interests of unproductive financial¹³ or real estate capital that does not necessarily generate much employment.

In concluding this subsection, it is clear that the dual strategy of capital accumulation through land and dispensing with labour is evident in the creation of Amaravati capital city.

Media reports also indicate that Singapore-based entrepreneurs have been holding or trying to get hold of significant land parcels in several parts of the world, including China. In the case of AP, the Singapore private companies that prepared the Amaravati master plans have been seeking 6,000–7,000 acres of land (Sivaramakrishnan 2015). The fragmentation of labour that this will result in for the vast majority will, of course, make exploitation (in a Marxian sense) more intense, but it also promises to destroy even the minimal coherence and unity of labouring lives.

This is not to suggest that capital accumulation can go on through a weak incorporation of labour in any sustainable fashion. However, the vision of the state and the emerging (and entrenched) capitalist classes in AP is guided precisely by this fantasy. In this process, labour will not only be devalued, but also degraded and fragmented in an unprecedented way, while accumulation goes on through dispossession or by appropriation of bits of this fragmented labour. This seems to be the primary emerging dynamic of AP capitalism.

City-centric Cores with Weak Ties to Hinterlands

In this section, the new vision of development of AP in terms of city-centric cores and hinterlands is discussed.

State’s vision of city-centric cores: The Clause 94(1) of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 states that the central government shall take appropriate fiscal measures, including offers of tax concessions to promote industrialisation and economic growth in the new states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. In anticipation of financial and other support from the central government, AP initiated the following measures in the last one and half years which provide the basis for us to interpret the state’s vision of development.

First, in addition to the land acquired for Amaravati, the state government got 45,000 acres of Nuzvidu forestland denotified from the central government for the purposes of developing an industrial hub in Krishna district. There is a total of about one lakh acre of land being devoted to build the core capital city in Guntur–Krishna districts.

Second, AP state’s “land bank” (across the whole state) has tripled in the last one year.¹⁴ AP owned about 2.93 lakh acres on 1 January 2015, which grew at an unprecedented rate to reach 7.54 lakh acres by January 2016. In addition, the government owns 27,911 acres in the form of developed plots in various industrial parks (TOI 2016a). This is one of the largest land banks possessed by any state in India. Having mastered the art of land pooling for the capital city region, the AP government is also extending the same strategy to acquire private lands as well from farmers to build airports, ports and other development projects. With all this land in its control, the AP government is looking for financial support from the central government, foreign and domestic private capital in building Amaravati, and in developing other core cities such as Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada and Tirupati as megacities.

Third, the city-centric development vision of the AP government is evident from its declaration in the state legislative

assembly in January 2015 to build three international airports (Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati) along with six medium level airports, implying one airport for every district. In addition, the government plans to build several major ports in the coastal districts (Bhavanapadu, Kalingapatnam, Masula ports, and further develop Machilipatnam port), develop new cities (from the present townships of Rajamundry, Kakinada, Kurnool and Nellore), metro rail and IT hub facilities in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati.

For instance, the AP government identified Visakhapatnam¹⁵ as an IT Investment Region (ITIR). Under this initiative, Tech Mahindra received 10 acres of land, the Society for Applied Microwave Electronic Engineering and Research got 13 acres of land, the Pharma City at Parwadagot 10 acres of land, two acres of Rishikonda beach front land for Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to set up the Super Fab laboratory in 2015, and finally 90 acres of land in Achyutapuram SEZ to Trina Solar, a Chinese solar company. Through these initiatives, the government aims to project Visakhapatnam as a “megacity.”

Fourth, the AP government announced mega tourism circuits (for example, Bhavani Islands, Kondaveeti Fort), coastal corridor projects (Visakhapatnam–Kakinada, Gangavaram–Kankipadu, Chittoor–Nellore) and national highway corridors (Chennai–Bengaluru, Hindupur–Bengaluru, Hyderabad–Bengaluru) as a way to develop Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Nellore, Tirupati and other core cities (Ravikiran 2016). In addition, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways of the central government committed ₹20,000 crore to build outer ring roads for Guntur and Vijayawada cities.

All the above initiatives aim to accelerate city-centric growth led by private capital that would receive government land on a long-term lease. However, a key question is—will capitalist growth initiated by the AP government incorporate a vision for the development of hinterlands and the vast agricultural and non-agricultural labouring population as well?

State’s vision of hinterlands: The Clause 94(2) of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 states that the central government shall support the programmes for the development of backward areas, including expansion of physical and social infrastructure. Accordingly, the state government announced three major initiatives that will contribute to the growth of all regions, particularly the backward districts of Rayalaseema and north coastal Andhra. These include: (i) establishment of industries/development projects, (ii) completion of irrigation projects, and (iii) establishment of educational institutions.

Establishment of industries and development projects: The AP government in its policy documents stated that the development projects such as textile parks, solar and wind parks, electronic and hardware parks, food processing and various SEZs would be set up in the backward districts. The Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) is ready with 7.5 lakh acres of public land for allotment to industries. A large proportion (about 60%) of these 7.5 lakh acres has been

acquired from Rayalaseema,¹⁶ one of the two backward regions (the other being north coastal Andhra) in the new state. It is important to understand the fate of the land acquired from farmers and the government land, which was allotted to the companies in the past in order to chart the direction in which the AP government is moving in the current scenario.

First, the present TDP government cancelled several MOUs of the previous government, as the companies that were allotted land did not invest in the respective SEZs. The cancelled projects¹⁷ include: Lepakshi Knowledge Hub¹⁸ (18,878 acres of private land and 6.608 acres of government land), Odyssey Science City¹⁹ (60,000 acres) both in Anantapur district; and the Vadarevu and Nizampatnam Port and Industrial Corridor (VANPIC)²⁰ project (14,193 acres of assigned land and 3,250 acres of private land) for a port and industrial corridor in Prakasam and Guntur districts (Andhra Pradesh Audit Report, accessed on 17 January 2016).

Second, the acquired land for other SEZ projects also remains largely unutilised even after MOUs have been signed with private parties. Private developers have grabbed a significant chunk of this land, while a certain proportion has remained with the government. The acquired land has not been returned to the farmers and assignees (Sarma 2010). To cite an example, the AP government had allotted 9,000 acres to Volkswagen, to set up a car manufacturing unit in Achutapuram and Rambilli mandals in Visakhapatnam in 2005. The Central Bureau of Investigation has filed a case against the company for duping the AP government to the tune of ₹11.67 crore (TOI 2014).

Despite the above record with private capital, the present government conducted a partnership summit in Visakhapatnam during 11–13 January 2016. The government has claimed that it has entered into MOUs with several foreign and Indian companies, worth about ₹5 lakh crore by offering thousands of acres of public land (TOI 2016a).

While the land bank (a large proportion of it from backward regions) provides the basis for the AP government to make deals with private companies, the question is whether the state is incorporating the interests of hinterlands and marginalised people. This is discussed here by examining the nature of land acquisition in the hinterlands.

First, if the spatial location of these acquired lands is scrutinised, all of them are close to big cities and urban centres or ports like Visakhapatnam and Kakinada, and southern parts of Nellore, Tirupati, Anantapur and Kadapa districts, which are relatively close to metros such as Bengaluru and Chennai. Previous studies have highlighted that apart from the growth of speculative real estate bubbles in the hinterland, the local population did not gain from these ventures (Seethalakshmi 2009).

Second, the government claims that it has acquired 7.5 lakh acres of government land without displacing the poor. In reality, the AP government amended the act 9 of 1977 (AP Assigned Lands Act) in 2006 to reclaim (in the name of public purpose) large tracts of assigned lands that belong to the extreme poor. The condition for resumption of these lands for

public purposes is written into the assignment deed, or the “D Form patta,” leaving the poor very little space to resist the same. Balagopal (2007) has pointed out that the poor who depend for livelihood on public land have to just leave it and move. They may be cultivating it without any title or on assignment or lease from the government, or they may be grazing sheep, quarrying stone, tapping palm toddy, catching fish, and so forth on this land. Every land acquisition only adds to the woes of forcible dispossession and displacement.

Third, as most of these assignees are Dalits (or tribals), the impact of acquiring government lands is even more disastrous. To narrate one instance from our fieldwork, Sugalis in Diguvapalli Thanda in Chilamatturu mandal of Anantapur district became dispossessed and pauperised when government took lands for Lepakshi Knowledge Hub in 2010. In our interviews with older inhabitants of the village, we gathered that the landless Sugalis used to survive by selling illicit liquor or by doing petty jobs (including stealing agricultural produce) before they were given assigned lands by the Indira Gandhi government in 1977. Their lives then changed for the better. When the state government under YSR took back the land ostensibly for public purpose, all the tribal households in the village had to either migrate or survive on scattered work at different locations.

Fourth, Bauxite ore in the scheduled areas of Visakhapatnam is another instance where state is accelerating capitalist accumulation by tactfully using the ambiguities in Samata judgment to grant mining leases to private companies. Apart from Jindal and AnRak projects, the government is planning to mine 27 hills in Araku Valley, Anantagiri, Chintapalli and GK Veedhi blocks. Previous studies point out that mining will affect the tribal commons extensively and their sources of livelihoods such as subsistence cultivation, minor forest produce, and even small-scale coffee plantations (Prasad et al 2012).

Irrigation projects: The AP government has discussed completion of the interlinking of Krishna and Godavari rivers (Pattiseema and Polavaram, both in coastal Andhra region), Handri Neeva lift irrigation project, Galeru–Nagari project (the last two in Rayalaseema) and Vamsadhara–Nagavaka project (in north coastal Andhra) (GoA 2015). The Pattiseema lift irrigation project (which will feed into the proposed capital city) was completed in 2015 on a war footing basis with an allocation of ₹1,007 crore to harness 80 tmc²¹ of water from Godavari river to Krishna delta, while other irrigation projects did not get the same attention. For instance, a mere ₹200 crore was allotted to Handri Neeva irrigation project in the 2015–16 budget neglecting one of the most important irrigation projects in the drought-prone district of Anantapur.

Villagers that we met in our field visit report a severe drinking water crisis in almost all the villages of Anantapur district. Discussions with the Anantapur Writers Association revealed that Anantapur is considered as a periphery even within Rayalaseema as it has no sources of water except the Tungabhadra river.²² One of the respondents said that all the 63 mandals in Anantapur were declared as drought-hit for the

last two years, but the government has done precious little. The villagers survive on meagre income from agriculture, and income from migration²³ to Bengaluru.

Establishment of educational institutions: The central government has promised to establish various educational institutions in AP after bifurcation. The proposed educational institutions include: central university and a health centre affiliated with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Anantapur, Urdu university in Kadapa, marine institute in Nellore, university of mines and mineral sciences in Prakasam, agricultural university and AIIMS in Guntur, Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) in Kurnool; Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institute of Education and Research in Chittoor, Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) in Visakhapatnam, petroleum university and Telugu University in East Godavari, National Institute of Technology in West Godavari, School of Planning and Architecture and an open university in Srikakulam (ET 2014).

Media reports indicate assurances from central government from time to time about establishment of these institutions. The local MLAs and members of Parliament engage the public and media by raising hopes about these institutions in different locations within each district and assurances about providing reservations or quotas to locals, employment opportunities, and so forth, while the opposition parties keep demanding more institutes and universities in each district. There is a growing sense of scepticism about the establishment of these institutions, and especially the high profile ones will be moved to the capital or thereabouts once again neglecting the hinterlands.

What we have tried to indicate in this subsection is that the state’s vision is mainly that of land acquisition and land bank policies in order to facilitate global capital flows and city-centred development. Commenting on this kind of a process, Michael Levien (2015) says that this is a shift from a regime of “land for production” to “land for the market.”

Thesis with a Weak Antithesis?

This section examines the emerging weak resistance from different classes of farmers, agricultural workers, and political parties.

Resistance from agricultural population: We discussed above how the state government acquired 33,000 acres of private land from different classes of farmers in the multicropped fertile region of Amaravati. We also answered the question of why different classes of landowners accepted the land pooling scheme. Was there any resistance from the farmers and other classes, and if so, what were the counter-strategies of the state? As Ramachandraiah (2015) points out, the so-called voluntary land pooling was done through both consent production (compensation) and where it did not work, through coercion by involving police, caste networks, blackmail, etc. Only in three villages—Undavalli,²⁴ Penumaka and Nidamaru—a majority

of farmers did not part with their lands because of clearly articulated economic reasons. First, land prices were quite high (₹2.7 crore–₹3 crore per acre, compared to ₹60 lakh–₹1 crore in other villages) even before the capital city Amaravati was announced in 2014. The offered compensation does not match the market price. Second, their current incomes arising out of high value crops like floriculture are much higher than the annual compensation of ₹50,000.

Agricultural workers, tenants and assignees have not put up strong resistance either. Agricultural workers on an average earn between ₹500 and ₹600 a day in the relatively prosperous villages. As floriculture employs a lot of labour, child labour is also prevalent. A considerable amount of migrant labour is also employed here. While this is a puzzle, many of these groups feel that they needed to be represented by political parties (discussed in the next subsection).

Resistance from political parties and groups: First, the main opposition party YSR²⁵ Congress Party (YSRCP) represented the concerns of its own party elite, particularly spatial (coastal Andhra) and class (landowners and real estate) interests, and hence, its opposition was only symbolic. In this symbolic protest, interests of landless workers, tenants and assignees did not figure at all, although these groups constituted a significant part of YSRCP's vote bank. Informal discussion with the Dalit women and men indicated that in each village the YSRCP leadership (mainly from the Reddy caste) raised a hue and cry about land pooling on the one hand, while on the other, they actively negotiated a compensation package with the revenue officials who visited the village. They did not take up the issues of landless workers.

Second, the left parties (mainly the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—CPI(M)—tried to represent the interests of both landowners and the landless. For instance, the left parties mobilised their agricultural workers to fight for an increase in their monthly pension from ₹2,500 to ₹9,000. They also took up the issues of marginal, small farmers where there were ambiguities in title deed (*patta*), when *jareebu* lands were wrongly notified as metta lands. They also raised issues about assigned lands where Dalits are entitled to compensation.

However, the left has not been able to alter the overall discourse about land pooling. There were two sets of problems with the strategies of the left parties. First, they were quite ambitious in taking up the issues of all the classes ranging from rich peasantry to tenants and landless (including tenants and workers). Given their weak organisation, the strategy to represent all the classes at the same time did not help mobilise any of them in a focused way. Second, the left parties (CPI, CPI(M), Maoist, Marxist Leninist groups) were not able to make a concerted effort to explain the capitalist logic of state under the leadership of Chandrababu Naidu, as they are a divided lot, with each party possessing its own agenda. Political activists in Anantapur also sense that the political visions of all the parties, including the left, are centred on the core region, that is, the coastal Andhra.

Third, the Dalit groups and non-governmental organisations, which are quite active in Guntur district, did not have any presence in this whole process of displacement due to land acquisition and pooling.

Resistance from hinterlands: There is scattered resistance in the hinterlands as described here:

First, resistance from farmers has been reported in the case of Bhavanapadu project in Srikakulam district, Masula port in Machilipatnam in Krishna district, Bhogapuram airport in Vijayanagaram district, Orvakallu airport in Kurnool district, Kuppam airport project in Chittoor district. While each of these projects (airport, harbour, etc) requires a few tens of acres, the government has issued notification to acquire thousands of acres.

Second, while there is some resistance in the case of acquisition of multicropped fertile lands, it is absent when government lands are acquired, which affects assignees and a large number of agricultural workers. To turn to recent history, the Koneru Ranga Rao Committee (appointed during the period of united AP) pointed out that in the last three decades, cultivators within the category of SCs decreased from 23% to 12% and the proportion of agricultural labourers increased from 57% to 72%. The AP audit report indicates that 88,492 acres of assigned land was alienated during 2006–11 to private players.

The above description can be conceptualised as a thesis that meets a weak antithesis only to completely envelop or absorb it. At a regional level, agrarian social structure of south coastal Andhra indicates that there is a great concentration of land-ownership among absentee landlords, non-cultivating resident households and rich peasants (drawn from so-called upper castes—Kamma, Reddy and Kapu), who have been holding land in anticipation of the higher real estate value rather than agricultural production. At a national level, there is a growing phenomenon of fragmented labour, that is, lack of solidarity and class consciousness among the landless, marginal, small farmers, tenants, artisanal and petty commodity producers. It has been pointed out by scholars that the struggle in the Indian countryside is more over a class formation rather than the struggle between classes (Harriss-White and Gooptu 2000; Bernstein 2010). Whether these are transient phenomena in a deeper process of a massive urban transformation of the Indian social formation is an open question.

Conclusions

The three dynamics (capital accumulation through a weak incorporation of labour; city-centric cores with weak ties to hinterlands; and thesis with a weak antithesis) that we identified in the new AP state have come together at a peculiar moment. We are not arguing that these dynamics will become necessarily hegemonic. However, unless counter-hegemonic forces find a way to oppose these dynamics, a highly unequal and unsustainable model will be implanted in the new state. This thesis is presented as inevitable and as a response to the hurt that has been caused by the bifurcation of united AP and

the loss of Hyderabad city. In many ways, in the eyes of the ruling classes, old-fashioned agricultural development is passé so that the future gains are in non-agricultural sectors and horticulture kinds of innovations in agriculture. There will be large-scale depredations, displacements and extreme fragmentation of the labouring lives if the ruling classes have their way. On the other hand, political resistance is either weak or it has become excessively opportunistic. While the present picture is bleak, it remains to be seen how new resistance will emerge out of the contradictions between capital and labour, city-centric cores and hinterlands, and the dominant and the oppressed caste groups in the region.

While it is generally true that capitalism produces uneven spatial development, there is a unique opportunity to plan a more balanced development in AP now. This opportunity has not been taken up so far in the imagination around Amaravati. The imagination of the new capital city of AP comes out of a neo-liberal ideological frame that has largely outlived its

purpose even in terms of providing a stable future of profitability for its own proponents, capitalist elite across the world. Working people from across the world (including the so-called advanced countries) have been demanding a very different economic and social configuration that will address inequality and basic issues of well-being. Where such demands are unaddressed, we are witnessing the unfolding of a dark path from recent elections (in Europe, the us, other parts of the developed world, and our own country)—emergence of neo-fascist regimes that threaten to throw us back to a distant past, while unleashing violence against working people, women, immigrants, and people that do not belong to the dominant religion, race or caste. It is imperative that the imagination of a new state such as AP internalises the concerns of the working and marginalised people in pursuing an agenda of inclusive growth that should start with reimagining the capital city project of Amaravati as a people's capital and not as a capital designed for the capitalist class.

NOTES

- 1 Despite various provisions in the AP Reorganisation Act, the Fourteenth Finance Commission report recommendations, oral commitment made by the then Prime Minister in February 2014, the recommendations made by the NITI Aayog in 2015, and a strong demand by all political parties, including the ruling TDP, central government only agreed for a special package rather than special category status for the resource-starved new AP state.
- 2 Surbana, the land consultant, is involved in planning—urban design and infrastructure planning while Jurong, the sub-consultant, conducted the economic studies, positioning and industrial estate planning.
- 3 It is worthwhile to point out that the entire discourse of world-class cities, as David Harvey (2000) has highlighted, emerged in order to facilitate free flow of capital investments and to maximise profits within the framework of market-oriented capitalist development.
- 4 Swiss Challenge is a method in which an unsolicited bid is made by a third party in the construction of infrastructure projects and then other players are allowed to improve on this bid. The original bidder can come back and improve on the best bid later.
- 5 The revenue share offered by the Singapore consortium could be disclosed only to companies that are qualified and had the technical financial capacities to build such a capital. The AP government told the court that the conditions provided suit only for the Singapore firm and no Indian builder would even qualify for it.
- 6 The material for this paper was collected through a fieldwork in the months of February, August, and December 2015. The data was collected through focus-group meetings, interviews with affected farmers and workers in the capital city region, political activists in Vijayawada, Guntur and Anantapur. In December 2015, we visited Anantapur, to get a view on the proposed capital city from what is already the periphery of the new state. Fieldwork in north coastal Andhra was carried out in August 2016.
- 7 For Godavari, the caste groups that spearheaded this phenomenon are Rajus and Kapus, whereas the corresponding caste groups for

Krishna and Penna are Kamma and Reddy, respectively.

- 8 GO 123 was silent on the rehabilitation of landless poor like agricultural labourers and artisans living in the villages. The high court quashed this controversial GO in August 2016 and reminded the government that it is not a private property dealer (Ravikiran 2016).
- 9 Land pooling has been experimented with in China (for example, in Chongqing) and in other parts of India (for example, New Delhi).
- 10 CRDA also has the power to fix the boundaries (*kantham*, in the local parlance) of each village.
- 11 The farmlands were “assigned” to landless families as a measure of economic redistribution carried out over the years after independence. They are farms that became available to the government either by way of land-ceiling legislation or the Bhoodan movement, or are simply surplus government land.
- 12 Pedagantipadu and Gangavaram in Gajuvaka mandal, and Tadi in Parvada mandal in Visakhapatnam.
- 13 Another dimension to this story came into limelight and public focus when the call money scandal broke out in Vijayawada and other urban spaces in AP in December 2015. Call moneylending is an institution that is used by working people to acquire loans for future exigencies. The borrowers call an agency for a loan, and the loan with very high interest rates (ranging from 60% to 300% per annum) is given with a promissory note, where fixed properties are pledged if the loan is not repaid in a timely fashion. That the moneylenders have also been coercing sexual favours out of women, who cannot repay on time, further adds to the opprobrium of this institution. However, the key point here is to make a note that the unproductive entrenched capitalist classes in AP do not care about how labour is degraded or fragmented or reduced to tatters, as long as accumulation process can go on.
- 14 After bifurcation, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu directed the revenue department to identify 10 lakh acres of government land in all the 13 districts and create a land bank. The revenue department managed to identify 7.5 lakh acres of land in the last one year.
- 15 Visakhapatnam is also one of the 20 smart cities announced by the central government recently. AP state has entered into an agreement

with the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) on 12 February 2016.

- 16 Acres of land acquired in four districts of Rayalaseema—Kadapa (1,06,829), Anantapur (1,30,842), Chittoor (1,60,938) and Kurnool (45,166).
- 17 These projects were cancelled as they violated the terms and conditions which were required to be met such as providing direct or indirect employment and completing the project in 5–10 years.
- 18 The Government of AP entered into a MoU with Lepakshi Knowledge Hub Pvt Ltd in December 2008 for the establishment of an SEZ in Gorantla and Chilamattur mandals of Anantapur district. The company was supposed to invest ₹8,000–₹10,000 crore in 5–10 years and generate an employment of 1.5 lakh persons.
- 19 Odyssey Science City, a mega township SEZ was proposed to be built in Anantapur district with an investment of \$25 billion (₹1.1 lakh crore) over a decade by a consortium of four Australia and Singapore based consultants.
- 20 AP government signed a MoU in 2008 with Government of Ras-al-Khaimah (RAL) to develop an integrated Vodaravu and Nizampatnam Port and port-based industries including cargo and container terminals and an industrial corridor (VANPIC) in Prakasam and Guntur districts.
- 21 Tmc is the abbreviation for one thousand million cubic feet (1,000,000,000 = 1 billion), commonly used to measure the volume of water in a reservoir or river flow.
- 22 The possibility of water sharing from Tungabhadra is remote. This is due to the fact that over seven projects are already in progress besides many upcoming check dams in upper

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reaches of the river in Karnataka state. Karnataka holds up the water in the Hagari river to a great extent depriving AP (Anantapur) of its lower riparian rights as guaranteed by the Bachawat tribunal. This is also evident from the Bhairavani Tippan project, which is unable to supply water to even a third of its planned ayacut (0.4 tmc ft of water as against 2.5 tmc ft capacity) (Hindu 2011).

- 23 About six lakh people from Rayalaseema migrate to the capital of neighbouring states—Bengaluru, Chennai and Mumbai (TOI 2016b).
- 24 In 2011, when the Congress government wanted to acquire 67 acres, Chandrababu Naidu opposed this move saying that it will affect the historic caves in Undavalli. Now the present government plans to acquire hundreds of acres in the same village!
- 25 YSR was elected twice as chief minister of united Andhra Pradesh. His tenure lasted between 2004 and 2009.

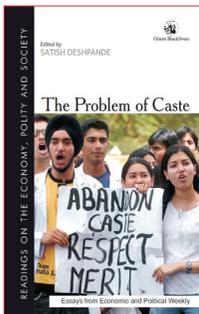
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The Problem of Caste

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Caste is one of the oldest concerns of the social sciences in India that continues to be relevant even today.

The general perception about caste is that it was an outdated concept until it was revived by colonial policies and promoted by vested interests and electoral politics after independence. This hegemonic perception changed irrevocably in the 1990s after the controversial reservations for the Other Backward Classes recommended by the Mandal Commission, revealing it to be a belief of only a privileged upper caste minority – for the vast majority of Indians caste continued to be a crucial determinant of life opportunities.

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