CHAPTER 3

Labor and Employment in the Emerging Rural-Urban Continuum in India: Toward a Cohesive Policy

D. Narasimha Reddy

Introduction

The origins of modern development theory are rooted in the visualization of development largely as a process of structural transformation in the nature and composition of production, employment and location. The several contributions explaining the development with the labor process at the core stand out, each explaining one of the two major dimensions of transformation of traditional economies. While the contribution of Lewis (1954) provides a comprehensive explanation of the shift of labor and employment from traditional to modern economic activities, Harris-Tadaro (1970) explains the spatial shifts but without all the complexities of labor mobility associated with contemporary developing economies. Perhaps there is no other paper in development economics that has aroused as much abiding interest and investigation as that of Lewis, whether it was fifty years (Kirkpatrick and Barrientos 2004)

D.N. Reddy (✉)
University of Hyderabad, Telangana, Hyderabad, India

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or sixty years (Gollin 2014) later. This is in spite of the caution sounded by Lewis himself when he observed that "… the model is illuminating in some places at sometimes, but not in places or other times … I was trying to understand not to prescribe" (Lewis 1984). In terms of explaining labor mobility as a part of the development process, the "Lewis turning point", despite the caution, continues to be the focus of much of the scholarly work as much as informed journalism (*The Economist* 2013; Cai and Wang 2008; Knight 2007; Das and N'Diaye 2013 to cite a few). Rural-urban interface in terms of changes in employment and labor market structure, labor productivity and wages form critical dimensions of the "Lewis turning point". Tadaro's primary focus was on explaining the rationale of migration mediating the shifts increasingly from the rural informal to the urban formal sectors. The emerging process of change in the employment structure in countries like India does not conform strictly to these theoretical expectations of progressive shift of labor from informal to formal in either rural or urban activities, and the structure of urbanization and the nature of the labor process across rural and urban space differ. Hence, what is attempted here is a contextual and empirical development in the labor and employment conditions across the rural-urban areas with the objective of abstracting certain emerging tendencies which may be helpful in understanding the nature of changes and possibly in designing appropriate interventions. The chapter is divided into five sections. The following part of the introduction draws attention to the growing consensus on rural-urban continuum. The second part refers to a certain uniqueness of the rural-urban composition and the urbanization process in India and the rural-urban spillovers of formal and informal employment and organization of production. The third section analyzes the nature of migration and focuses attention on the condition of the temporary or circular migration and its invisibility. It also points out the potential of rural-urban commuting as a special advantage in the context of urbanization with a widespread network of small towns. The fourth section presents a case for evolving a comprehensive policy that would recognize the potential of small town–driven growth of urbanization and the combination of migration- and commuting-based movement of labor. The concluding part pleads for change in the approach toward urbanization and migration with which appropriate policy interventions could lay the foundations for better development.

Rural-Urban Continuum

Although the pace and processes may differ, the growing urbanization is as much a reality as the continued existence of a substantial part of the economic activities in the rural segment as well in many of the developing countries. This indicates a close nexus in production and employment activities between rural and urban areas. Yet there has been persistence of the notion of "rural" and "urban" divide because of historical reasons. A long and raging debate since the Industrial Revolution on the rural and urban divide resulted in two divergent views (UN 2002). The strong anti-urban view is based on idealizing rural life and regretting its disappearance due to urban destructive process leading to breakdown of social life. In contrast, the pro-urban view considers cities as the engine of economic growth, as a progressive process with the characteristics of facilitating technological innovations, economic development, and socio-political transformation. These dichotomous views on rural and urban areas are the main source of differentiated policies and strategies for the rural in contrast to urban areas.

However, there is a growing realization of the interlinkages and the interdependence of rural and urban areas and the need to approach development strategies by conceptualizing rural-urban as a continuum rather than as a divide. The notion of "divide" is questioned as an oversimplification and distortion of realities (Tacoli 2003, 2007). There is a wider consensus on the rural-urban continuum (see, for instance, a review by Tacoli 1998a, b, 2003; Mylott 2007) and the strong resolution at the United Nations for "bringing to an end the counterproductive rural-urban dichotomy debate and promoting a policy perspective that views urban and rural areas as existing in human settlement continuum" (UN 2002). The available empirical findings also show strong rural-urban linkages in terms of movement of people, goods, capital and other social transactions (Lynch 2005; Agargaard et al. 2010). These interactions play important roles in rural as well as in urban development. The rural-urban linkages are more intensive and important for livelihoods and production systems. There is also the emergence of peri-urban settlements along the roads and around the major urban settlements. Much of the rural population depends on the urban population for a range of services, including secondary schools, credit, agricultural inputs and equipment, hospitals and government services, in addition to better employment opportunities. One of the factors which have a key role in rural-urban linkages is decreasing incomes of farmers, especially small-scale producers who depend on non-farm incomes often in urban areas (Tacoli 2003).

The impact of rural-urban linkages depends upon households' wealth and status. With growing social polarization under the influence of neoliberal reforms and globalization, wealthier households use both rural-urban resources as part of an accumulation strategy while poor and vulnerable households and individuals negotiate the rural-urban continuum for survival. The reliance of low-income households is more on both rural-based and urban-based resources in constructing their livelihoods. Most of the policies designed in the rural-urban divide framework ignore those who are straddling rural and urban space and these hurt the poor more (Tacoli 2003). There is a need to recognize that in most of the small farm-dominated economies like Sub-Saharan Africa, there has been "deagrarianisation" with the collapse of agriculture as the primary source of rural livelihoods and the pursuit of non-farm options (Ellis 2005), which makes them straddle urban as well as rural occupations.

Urbanization in India

The development experience of India over six decades in the post-independence period throws up certain unique features of change in the composition of the rural-urban population. There is a point of view that India has been one of the slowest urbanizing countries. In 2011, India was home to the world's largest share of rural population and also the world's second largest urban population (Table 3.1). Unlike China, which is fast urbanizing, India is projected to have the largest share of rural population even in the decades to come. In 2050, by which time India could be an advanced country, while the projected rural population share within India may shrink to 30%, its global share of rural population

Table 3.1 India's rural and urban population in perspective: 2011

Country	*Rural*			*Urban*			
	Population	*Global*		*Population*	*Global*		*Urbanization*
	(million)	*Percentage Share*	*Rank*	*(million)*	*Percentage Share*	*Rank*	*Percentage*
India	833	24	1	377	11	2	31
China	700	20	2	722	19	1	53

Source: Proctor and Lucchesi (2012)

Table 3.2 Urbanization scenario in India

	1951	*1961*	*1971*	*1981*	*1991*	*2001*	*2011*	*2026*[a]	*2030*[b]
Total population (Million)	361	439	598	683	844	1027	1210	1399	1470
Urban population (Million)	62	79	109	159	217	285	377	545	590
Urbanization rate (percentage)	17	18	18	26	26	28	31	39	40
Inter-censal annual rate of growth (percentage) of urban population	–	2.34	3.24	3.79	3.09	2.75	2.76	–	–

Source: [a]Registrar General and Census Commissioner (2006)

[b]MGI (2010)

would remain the largest. This holds a unique situation in the economic space as well. But this is no reason to believe that there would be continued slower growth of urbanization in India.

India's share in the world's urban population as the second largest would also remain so for decades to come. First, the contention that India's urban growth rate was declining was based on the experience of the 1980s and more so of the 1990s, when the annual growth rate declined to 2.75% compared with more than 3% in the previous decades. It is also true that the share of India's urban population increased at a rather low pace, from 17.3% in 1951 to 27.8% in 2001; that is, it took half a century for ten percentage points of increase (Kumar and Li 2007), but all that has changed and there is a turn toward rising urban growth between 2001 and 2011 (Table 3.2).

And during the last decade, the absolute increase in urban population (91 million) for the first time was higher than the increase in rural population (90.5 million). Second, it is also true that the apparently slow growth of urbanization in India, in contrast to some of the countries in Latin America with a lower population threshold for urban classification, may be partly due to the restrictive official definition of urbanization (Tacoli 1998a, b; UN 2001).[1] Third, another turning point of the last decade was the shift in the sources of urbanization from natural urban population growth to other factors (Fig. 3.1). During the decade of 2001–2011, the contribution of the natural growth of the urban population declined to 44% while the share of reclassification of rural settlements as census

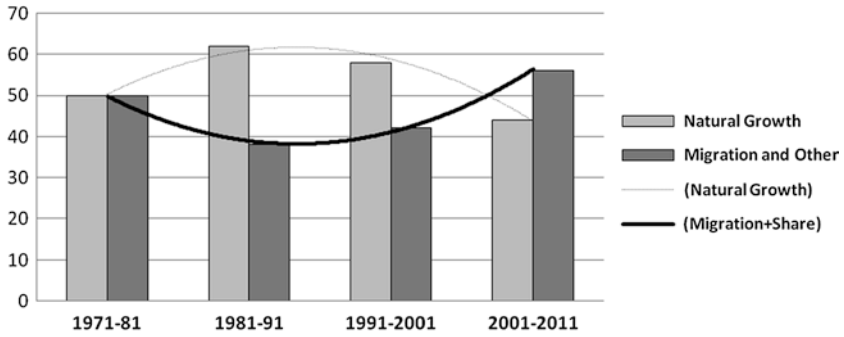

Fig. 3.1 Components of urban population growth (1971–2011, as percentage) Source: Bhagat (2011)

towns (29.5%), rural-urban migration (22%) and reclassification due to expansion of urban boundaries (4.5%) together contributed to 56% of urban population growth (Pradhan 2013). Fourth, the size-specific changes in the urbanization process in the last decade also refute the impression that urbanization in India was top-heavy, causing severe congestion problems in the mega cities and hence unsustainable. While it was true that in 2001 the share of cities with over 5 million people in total urban population in India was as high as 23.5% compared with the world average of 15.5% (Kundu et al. 2003), the last decade experienced a decline in the growth rate of mega cities with a population of 10 million or more. Whereas the decadal population growth of Greater Mumbai UA was 30.47% in the 1990s, it declined to 12.05% in 2001–2011. During the same period, a similar decline was observed in Delhi UA (from 52.24% to 26.69%) and in Kolkata (from 19.60% to 6.87%) (Kundu 2014).

Furthermore, in contrast to the earlier decades, the period between 2001 and 2011 experienced much faster growth at the lower end of the size of the urban settlements because of a surge in the growth of "Census Towns".[2] In the earlier decade, the average growth of new census towns was about 400 to 500 (Kundu 2014), but in the decade of 2001–2011, a record number of 2532 new census towns were added (Table 3.3). There are also clear indications that the potential of small towns to contribute to the future growth of urbanization is very high. Table 3.4 shows that, by 2011, large villages each with a population of more than 5000 together accounted for about 24% of the rural population but were considered rural

Table 3.3 2001–11: Surge in the growth of towns

Type of towns	*2001*	*2011*	*Increase*
Statutory towns	3799	4041	242
Census towns	1362	3894	2532
All towns	5161	7935	2774

Source: Pradhan (2013)

Table 3.4 Percentage share in rural population of villages with population of over 5000

Year	*Villages with 5000–9999*	*Villages with 10,000 and above*	*Total*
2001	13.21	8.55	21.76
2011	14.86	8.68	23.54

Source: Chandrasekhar and Sharma (2014)

since they did not fulfill the density or occupation criteria of urbanization. But with the fast growth of the non-farm share of rural employment, most of these settlements are likely to emerge as small town urban centers. Thus, the experience of the last decade shows that urbanization is a critical threshold of change reversing the trend of declining growth. Even as the pace of the growth of mega-city urban agglomerations is on the decline, the surge in the growth of small towns indicates a potential for a more balanced spread of urbanization with possible stronger linkages along the rural-urban economic space as well.

Employment Across the Rural-Urban Space

The distribution of labor force across rural and urban areas reflects proportions more or less similar to the population distribution, and the estimated shares of population in 2011–12 between rural and urban areas are 68.5% and 31.5%, respectively, and of the labor force are 67.9% and 32.1%. But the structure of employment within rural and urban areas varies substantially. It is assumed that while agriculture dominates rural employment, non-farm activities dominate urban activities. The received wisdom (Lewis 1954) of structural transformation in the development process suggests that with the growth of the economies there will be an increasing shift in employment from agriculture to non-agricultural activities, and

often it is also assumed that such a shift from agriculture to non-agriculture would go hand in hand with a shift from rural to urban employment. There is a widely shared view that the Lewisian kind of structural transformation in India is delayed or distorted. The recent experience in changes in employment shows that there have been far-reaching changes with the shifts from agriculture to non-agriculture not as much in the form of rural to urban but in the rural employment structure, which some have referred to as stunted structural change (Binswanger-Mkhize 2013). By 2012–13, the proportion of agricultural households in the total rural households declined to 57.8% and agricultural households with agriculture as the principal source of income constituted about 68%. As a result, overall rural households with agriculture as the principal source of income constituted only 39.5% (NSSO 2013). Except in four states (Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh), agriculture is no longer the main source of income for the majority of rural households in India. This may sound paradoxical since the majority of workers in rural areas are still employed in agriculture. But the fact is that most of the agricultural households depend on multiple sources of employment, and particularly for many small and marginal farmers, non-farm sources constitute a substantial part of income.

Table 3.5 shows the changing structure of rural and urban employment over a decade. The major difference between rural and urban employment structures is that while rural employment is dominated by agriculture, urban employment is substantially in services. But within the urban employment structure, there has been a marginal increase in manufactur-

Table 3.5 Structural Changes in Rural and Urban Employment

Sector	*Percentage distribution of employment*			
	1999–2000		*2011–12*	
	Rural	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Urban*
Agriculture	74.1	7.5	61.2	5.5
Manufacturing	7.4	22.5	8.8	23.7
Construction	3.8	8.4	11.8	9.7
Other industries	0.8	1.6	0.8	1.9
Services	13.9	60.0	17.4	59.2
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Ghose (2016)

ing and construction over the years, but substantial changes have not occurred. But the rural employment structure has changed considerably, with a steep decline in the share of agriculture from 74.1% in 1999–2000 to 61.2% in 2011–12, a more-than-threefold increase in the share of construction, and an increase in the share of the service sector from about 14% to about 17% during the period.

From the point of view of the rural-urban continuum in labor and employment terms, the distribution of employment across the sectors, especially the non-agricultural sector, is of critical importance. Table 3.6 shows the distribution of rural and urban share of employment in major sectors of economic activity in 2011–12. There has been a drastic decline in employment in agriculture in rural areas by over 32 million within a

Table 3.6 Distribution of Rural and Urban Employment by Sectors (UPSS)

(In millions)

Sector	*2011–12*			*Net change 2004–05 – 2011–12*		
	Rural	*Urban*	*All*	*Rural*	*Urban*	*All*
I. Agriculture + allied	215.3 (95.3)	9.2 (4.1)	224.4 (100)	−32.3	−1.0	−33.3
II. Non-agricultural						
1. Manufacturing	29.1 (47.5)	32.3 (52.5)	61.3 (100)	1.5	3.6	5.1
2. Construction	37.2 (74.5)	12.7 (25.5)	49.9 (100)	20.5	3.3	23.8
3. Trade, repair, hotels	23.1 (40.8)	33.5 (59.2)	56.6 (100)	2.3	4.7	7.0
4. Transport, communications	9.9 (46.5)	11.4 (53.5)	21.3 (100)	1.4	1.2	2.6
5. Finance, insurance, and so on	2.6 (19.5)	10.7 (80.5)	13.3 (100)	1.2	4.6	5.8
6. Community, social + personal services	16.4 (40.6)	24.0 (59.4)	40.4 (100)	0.5	2.9	3.4
Total non-agricultural	120.8 (48.7)	127.3 (51.3)	248.1 (100)	27.3	20.8	48.1
Total employment	336.0 (71.1)	136.5 (28.9)	472.5 (100)	−5.0	19.7	14.7

Source: National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 61st, 66th, and 68th rounds

UPSS Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status of Employment

Table 3.7 Sectoral distribution of rural net domestic product (NDP)

Sector	*1980–81*	*1993–94*	*1999–2000*	*2011–12*
1. Agriculture and allied	64.6	56.99	51.42	38.34
2. Rural non-farm	35.64	43.01	48.58	61.66
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Papola (2013)

short period between 2004–05 and 2011–12. Leaving agriculture which is essentially a rural phenomenon and a fast declining one at that, the rural-urban employment share in other sectors reveals an interesting picture. The decline in agricultural employment is to a large extent compensated for by the rise in rural non-agricultural employment, predominantly by the phenomenal increase in the rural construction sector. Almost three fourths of all construction sector employment in the country is in rural areas. Even in the employment in manufacturing in the country, the share of rural areas is almost half (48%). And close to half of the employment is in "transport and storage". Thus, except for the financial sector, the share of rural employment is substantial, so much so that the rural share in the total non-agricultural employment is almost half (49%). The diversification in rural employment and the emergence of rural non-agricultural employment numerically close to urban share have far-reaching implications not only for the future direction of structural change but also for rural and urban linkages in production and employment aspects.

Contrary to some propositions, there is considerable evidence that employment in rural non-agriculture is not distress driven but a shift to relatively better productive work. Table 3.7 shows estimates of distribution of the value of rural net domestic product (NDP) between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Over a period of time, particularly since 1999–2000, there has been a steep increase in the share of non-farm sector, from less than half to 62% of the rural NDP.

Organized and Unorganized Sectors in Production and Employment

Over the years, although there has been improvement in the share of the organized sector in both rural and urban areas, in 2011–12, the organized sector still accounted for less than 10% of the total rural employment while almost two-thirds of urban employment is in the unorganized sector.

Table 3.8 shows that within the organized sector all employment is not formal; 97.3% of rural and 81% of urban employment are informal in nature. In both rural and urban areas, self-employment is the dominant form, accounting for over half of rural and about 40% of urban employment. What does this imply for the rural-urban continuum? Apparently, it suggests that the rural and urban employment conditions have not yet become seperate watertight compartment and with the rural implying unorganized and informal, and urban ending up as organized and formal, and thus leaving no room for mobility and employment opportunities across the rural-urban space.

On the question of quality of employment, apart from relatively insecure and low-paid informal employment, the prevalence of widespread underemployment is yet another indicator of the poor quality. Table 3.9 shows that, between 1999–2000 and 2011–12, there has been a substantial reduction in underemployment in both rural and urban areas. In the case of casual labor, it is significant to note the steep decline from about 23% to about 17% in rural areas, and wipes out the urban-rural difference. Of course it is not to digress from the fact that among casual labor underemployment still remains as high as 17% in both rural and urban areas.

In the case of unemployment, it is observed that when a large number of households are poor, the extent of unemployment is likely to be very low because the poor cannot afford to become unemployed. They take up

Table 3.8 Certain structural features of rural and urban employment as in organized and unorganized sectors and as formal and informal employment

Nature of employment	*Percentage distribution*			
	1999–2000		*2011–12*	
	Rural	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Urban*
1. Organized sector	5.4	27.2	9.5	34.4
2. Unorganized sector	94.6	72.8	90.5	65.6
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
II.				
1. Formal employment	2.7	18.8	3.6	19.0
2. Informal employment	97.3	81.2	96.4	81.0
i. Regular-informal	5.5	23.9	6.7	26.9
ii. Casual	40.7	18.1	37.4	14.6
iii. Self-employment	51.1	39.2	52.3	39.5
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Ghose (2016)

Table 3.9 Estimates of underemployment in different types of employment in rural and urban areas

Rate (percentage) of underemployment	*1999–2000*		*2011–12*	
	Rural	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Urban*
Regular-formal	8.8	9.3	1.2	1.3
Regular-informal	8.5	9.0	3.7	3.0
Casual	23.1	20.6	17.3	16.5
Self-employed	10.7	9.3	7.7	5.2
All	15.6	11.3	10.8	5.6

Source: Ghose (2016)

Note: On "daily status" basis—days not worked as percentage of days available

Table 3.10 Rural and urban unemployment rates (%) by age group

Age group	*1999–2000*		*2011–12*	
	Rural	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Urban*
15–24	5.9	15.5	8.7	14.0
25–29	3.1	8.5	3.5	6.0
30–59	0.1	1.1	0.3	0.8
All	2.1	5.5	2.5	4.0

Source: Ghose (2016)

whatever work is available even if it is poorly paid and lacks regularity. Therefore, the overall unemployment situation in rural and urban areas, though different from one another, still show a very low level of 2.5% in the former and 4.0% in the latter (Table 3.10). However, in the case of youth, the unemployment level is very high in urban areas, and in rural areas it is low but on the rise. This may be partly because of the relatively better educational status of youth looking for more productive work and partly because of the slow growth of employment opportunities.

The nature of enterprises in different sectors and changes in their urban-rural distribution and with this the changing share of employment across locations will have significant implications for the rural-urban continuum. There are clear indicators that enterprises in the organized sector have tended to move from their urban concentration toward the rural. There may be several reasons for this, including rising urban land prices, urban congestion, easy

Table 3.11 Changing Urban Share in Organized and Unorganized Manufacturing (Percentage Share)

Year	*Urban share in organized*			*Urban share in unorganized*		
	Units	*Employment*	*Output*	*Units*	*Employment*	*Output*
1994–95	68.8	66.7	62.0	23.9	30.2	56.5
2000–01	62.6	60.3	54.6	28.5	34.7	57.4
2005–06	59.5	56.7	51.4	27.9	34.7	58.9
2010–11	62.8	56.5	53.3	41.2	48.0	63.4
Change in urban share 1994–95 to 2010–11	−6.0	−10.0	−10.6	+17.3	+17.8	+7.0

Source: Ghani et al. (2012), National Sample Survey (NSS) Report No. 549, 2013

access to low-end labor in rural areas, and incentives by the governments. Simultaneously, there is a tendency toward increase in the share of unorganized enterprises in urban areas, particularly in activities with local demand for inputs or components to organized units. For understanding these changes there is paucity of information. However, there is certain extent of data from NSSO surveys over four points time confined to manufacturing sector is of some help. Table 3.11 provides the nature of the changing shares of urban areas in enterprises and employment in organized and unorganized manufacturing activities. The urban share in the organized enterprises and employment in manufacturing declined between 1994–95 and 2010–11 in spite of some increase in 2010–11 over 2005–06. In contrast, the urban share in enterprises and employment in unorganized manufacturing increased substantially in the period between 1994–95 and 2010–11. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 capture these shifts more clearly in graphic form.

Furthermore, a close look at the type of enterprises in unorganized manufacturing shows that, in terms of size of employment, there is not much difference between the rural and the urban ones. Table 3.12 shows that the average sizes of enterprises which ranged between 2.11 and 2.76 in rural and urban areas respectively in 1994–95 declined to the range of 1.83 and 2.31 by 2010–11. The inferences that could be drawn from these changes indicate growing potential for interlinkages in economic activities and labor mobility across the rural-urban space.

Unlike manufacturing, data on the urban and rural division between organized and unorganized enterprises are not easily available. However, one of the recent NSSO Rounds (67th R 2012) covered unorganized

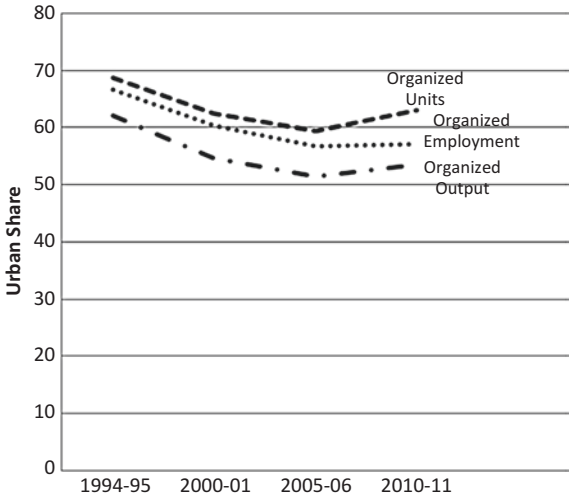

Fig. 3.2 Changing urban share in organized manufacturing

Table 3.12 Enterprises and employment in the unorganized (informal) manufacturing sector in India: 1994–95 to 2010–11

		*51st Round (1994–95)**	*56th Round (2000–01)*	*62nd Round (2005–06)*	*67th Round (2010–11)*
(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*
Rural	Enterprises (millions)	10.5	11.9	12.1	10.1
	Workers (millions)	22.1	24.0	23.5	18.5
	(Average number of workers per enterprise)	(2.11)	(2.01)	(1.93)	(1.83)
Urban	Enterprises (millions)	4.0	5.1	4.9	7.1
	Workers (millions)	11.1	13.1	13.0	16.4
	(Average number of workers per enterprise)	(2.76)	(2.57)	(2.63)	(2.31)

Source: NSS Report No. 434, NSS Report No. 478, Appendix Tables 1, 2 and 67th Round, 2012
*Owing to coverage differences, the figures of 51st Round are not strictly comparable with those of the 56th Round and 62nd Round

Table 3.13 Enterprises and employment in trade and "other services" in the unorganized sector in rural and urban areas: 2010–11

Sector	*Rural*			*Urban*			*All*		
	Units (M)	*Employment (M)*	*Average employment per unit (No.)*	*Units (M)*	*Employment (M)*	*Average employment per unit (No.)*	*Units (M)*	*Employment (M)*	*Average employment per unit (No.)*
Trade	10.6 (51.0)	15.4 (45.0)	1.45	10.2 (47.0)	18.8 (55.0)	1.84	20.8 (100)	34.2 (100)	1.64
"Other services"	10.2 (51.8)	19.3 (49.5)	1.89	9.5 (48.2)	19.7 (50.5)	2.07	19.7 (100)	39.0 (100)	1.97

Source: NSSO 67th Round (2012), Report No. 549
M millions; Figures in parentheses are percentages

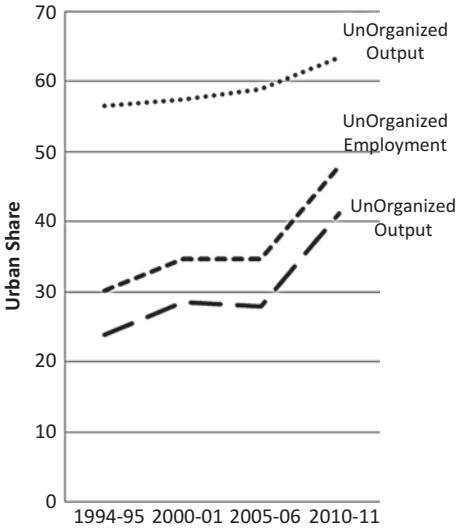

Fig. 3.3 Changing urban share in unorganized manufacturing
Source: Ghani et al. 2012

non-agricultural enterprises other than construction. Table 3.13 shows that in 2011–12 in unorganized trade and "other services", the urban share in enterprises is almost close to that of the rural share and that in the case of employment the urban share is more than half in both trade and "other services". Trade and "other services" in the unorganized sector are also tiny units in both rural and urban areas; on average, each unit employs about 1.45 to 1.97 persons (Fig. 3.3).

Migration and the Rural-Urban Continuum

Rural-urban migration is a key link in the rural-urban continuum. At one level, "the comparison of time and space inherent in globalization – deterritorialization – transforms places from bound items to sets of networks in motion, and migration is the most visible form of rural-urban interactions" (Clausen 2004). Beginning in the 1960s, a negative view took hold for quite some time in Asian countries that rural-urban migration was undesirable. Many Asian countries "denounced rural-urban migration and rapid urbanization as obstacles to development that generated poverty, unemployment, crime and social disorder, slums and squatter settlements in urban areas, many Asian governments adopted policies that aimed at stopping the rural population from migrating to the city.

The policies tried to reduce urbanization or redirect rural-urban migration to secondary towns and rural areas through transmigration, migration controls, deurbanization and industrial dispersal policies, sometimes at the expense of human rights and the environment" (UN 2001). Such an approach to rural-migration led to the neglect of several dimensions of migration, like the extended livelihoods across the rural-urban continuum and multi-spatial livelihoods which contributed to the rural economy as much as to the urban. However, there has been a change in attitude to migration in recent years. There is growing recognition that "… rapid urbanization should be accepted as inevitable", more so in the globalization context, and that there is a need to "promote and strengthen the capacity of cities and towns productively to absorb excess rural population and better manage development", and at the same time there is need to ensure that "… rural population be provided decent living conditions …" (UN 2002). Over the years, there has been gradual change in attitude on the issue, as another report of the UN pointed out: "… Rural-urban migration is no longer considered an expulsion of the rural poor from impoverished rural areas and a desperate flight to bright city lights that only result in more poverty in urban areas. Rural-urban migration is now seen in terms of the free-flow of labor to areas where it can be more productive and earn a higher income. Rural-urban migration contributes to economic growth and reduces disparities" (UN 2001). This is not to suggest that labor flows are smooth, homogenous, and harmonious processes. Neither urban labor markets nor rural-urban migrants are homogeneous (Wang et al. 2000). Urban labor markets are of various types with characteristics of segmentation, discrimination and wage rigidity. Similarly, rural-urban migrants have diverse attributes in terms of human capital and not necessarily rural surplus labor (Wang et al. 2000). The process of migration and the mediating institutions could be highly exploitative, calling for appropriate policy interventions.

Migration patterns vary from seasonal, temporary or circular to permanent migration, and gender, age, education, asset base, and—in societies like India—the social base determine the nature of migrant occupations and opportunities. Also, the outcome of rural-urban mobility depends upon the nature of access to urban labor markets which are broadly characterized as formal and informal. Informal labor markets are characterized by precarious employment, low-wage and irregular income, the lack of welfare benefits, and poor working environments. There is growing evidence that, in the globalization context, the urban informal economy not

only is here to stay but is growing and provides a major livelihood option for a significant proportion of the migrant workforce in non-agricultural activities in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Kumar and Li 2007).

In India, the main sources of data on migration are the decadal census and quinnial Employment and Unemployment Surveys (EUSs) of the NSSO, but not all the EUSs provide data on migration. Available data from both sources suffer from limitations (Srivatsava 2011). Over the decades, the increasing proportion of non-reporting of the duration of migration in the census has become a critical problem. There are often discrepancies in the data between census and NSSO sources. According to the 2001 census, using the change in the definition of Usual Place of Residence, 30.1% of the Indian population could be described as internal migrants, but the NSSO estimates for 2007–08 (64th Round of the NSS) show it as 28.6%. Both sources do show that bulk of migrants in India are women who migrate out of their villages because of exogenous marriages. The NSSO data for 2007–08 show that almost four fifths of migrants were female and that about 83% of them migrated because of marriage (Srivatsava 2011). For the purpose of understanding the labor and employment links in the rural-urban space, it is migration for economic reasons that becomes the focus. Both of the sources, however, show that migration for economic reasons has been on the rise. According to NSSO data for 2007–08, the rate of migration for economic reasons increased from 3% of the total population in 1993 to 3.01% in 199–00 to 3.04% in 2007–08 and was driven by the increase in the rate of male migration, which increased from 12.73% in 1993 to 14.36% in 2007–08.

Of the migrants for economic reasons, the two streams viz. rural-to-urban and urban-to-rural migration, distance of migration and duration are important indicators of the process and direction of development. Taking intra-district, inter-district and inter-state as proxies for short, medium, and long distance, respectively, Table 3.14 shows that rural-urban migration is the single largest stream and is the only stream with an increasing share. The growth in rural-urban migration is entirely driven by long-distance migration. The urban-rural stream has a modest share and a declining one at that. However, rural-urban and urban-rural streams together constitute half of all migration.

There are some questions that arise in the migration for economic reasons: what happens to the migrants if they were already in the workforce in some economic activity, and what happens to those who are out of labor force? And especially what happens to those moving from rural to urban and urban to rural? Table 3.15, which is based on 64th Round NSSO data (2007–08), has

Table 3.14 Distance and streams of migration for economic reasons: 1991 and 2001

Stream	*Short distance*[a]		*Medium distance*[b]		*Long distance*[c]		*All*	
	1991	*2001*	*1991*	*2001*	*1991*	*2001*	*1991*	*2001*
1. Rural-rural	16.2	13.0	7.9	7.2	4.4	5.9	28.5	26.1
2. Rural-urban	12.9	10.9	15.1	15.1	13.4	19.4	41.4	45.4
3. Urban-rural	2.2	1.7	2.4	1.5	1.1	1.2	5.7	4.4
4. Urban-urban	4.0	4.1	10.1	9.0	9.4	9.0	23.5	22.1

Source: Srivatsava (2011)
[a]Intra-district; [b]Inter-district; [c]Inter-state

Table 3.15 Employment status before and after economic migration: 2007–08 (percentage)

Stream		*SE-Ag*	*SE-Nag*	*RS*	*CL*	*Worker*	*UE*	*OLF*	*Non-Worker*	*Total*
Rural-rural	Before	9.0	1.3	1.0	11.6	22.9	0.8	76.3	77.1	100
	After	23.5	4.0	2.6	17.0	47.2	0.3	52.6	52.8	100
Rural-urban	Before	6.0	4.1	4.5	9.1	23.8	7.1	69.2	76.2	100
	After	2.4	12.4	18.0	7.3	40.1	0.8	59.2	59.9	100
Urban-rural	Before	2.6	4.5	10.9	8.4	26.4	1.3	72.4	73.6	100
	After	13.1	9.2	8.2	11.7	42.2	1.2	56.6	57.8	100
Urban-urban	Before	0.7	5.1	13.8	2.0	21.6	3.6	74.8	78.4	100
	After	0.6	10.9	20.3	2.4	34.2	1.0	64.9	65.8	100
All	Before	6.8	2.6	4.2	9.5	23.1	2.6	74.3	76.9	100
	After	15.0	7.1	8.8	12.5	43.5	0.5	56.0	56.5	100

Source: Srivatsava (2011)
SE-Ag Self-Employment in Agriculture, *SE-NAg* Self-Employment in Non-Agriculture; *RS* Regular/Salaried
CL Casual Labor, *UE* Unemployed, *OLF* Out of Labor Force

some interesting results. For all the streams, the worker status increased, the "out of labor force" comes down, and unemployment comes down or almost varnishes, even in the case of rural-urban migrants among whom unemployment was high before migration. For rural-urban migrants, most of the gains in work status are in non-agricultural self-employment and in regular or salaried employment. Interestingly, urban-to-rural migrants appear to be moving to agricultural self-employment, which emerges as the single largest source of employment.

Most of the internal migration driven by the economic growth surge in recent decades belongs to the rural-urban migration stream (Keshri and Bhagat 2012). According to the total migration estimates derived from the 64th Round of NSS (2007–08), rural-to-urban migration accounted for 63% while rural-rural migration was 30%, and the other two streams—urban-rural (31%) and urban-urban (5%)—constituted much smaller proportions. If we divide rural-urban migration into permanent and temporary,[3] circular or seasonal migration, it is the latter stream that is complex and fraught with several vulnerabilities that become critical for policy (Breman 2013). The number of workers involved in this stream of migration is very large, although it is widely recognized that the available data suffer from gross underestimation (Deshinkar and Aktar 2009; Srivatsava 2011; de Haan 2011). Seasonal, circular or temporary migration according to NSS 64th Round was 13 million or 2% of the total working force. But alternate estimates based on micro-studies range from 40 million (Srivatsava 2011; de Haan 2011) to 100 million (Deshingkar and Aktar 2009). One of the main reasons for the NSSO underestimate is the restrictive definition of period of duration of temporary migration as spanning from 2 to 6 months. Many field studies, however, show that the duration of temporary migration could stretch more than 6 months. For instance, an extensive study in Bihar shows that more than 50% of rural-urban temporary male migration involves more than 8 months (Datta et al. 2012). A study of migration from Uttarakhand shows that about 73% of circular migration is for about 6 to 12 months (Mamgain 2014). Another study of Chennai agglomeration shows that almost all inter-state long-distance temporary migration is for more than 6 months (Jayaranjan 2014). Furthermore, rural-urban temporary or circular migration raises several social problems (Deshingkar and Akter 2009; Srivatsava and Shashikumar 2003; Pattenden 2012).

Rural-urban temporary migration is much more complex than permanent migration and requires more attention in the context of India where it is theoretically—and, to a large extent, even empirically—still invisible. The labor market–related issues in this process of migration and its links to particularly urban informal sector have yet to receive the attention they deserve. In 2009–10, about 30% of the urban workforce was informally employed and half of that was self-employed and half was wage-employed. "The first ever estimates of domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors, and waste pickers indicate that these groups represented 33 percent of total urban employment and 41 percent of urban informal employment in that year. Home-based work was the largest sector: representing

18 percent of total urban employment and 23 percent of urban informal employment" (Chen and Ravindran 2012). In India, though large national surveys have some information on employment, but hardly have any information on the working and living conditions of temporary urban migrant workers. Scattered micro studies bring to light several disadvantages faced by them. Often, the very recruitment process through labor contractors puts migrant urban workers at a disadvantage. The advances made at the time of recruitment may turn into a kind of semi-bondage in some cases (de Neve and Carswell 2013). The migrant workers are hardly organized and have very little bargaining power. They are mostly employed in the unorganized sector without any regulation and this compounds their vulnerability. They suffer from longer working hours, poor living and working conditions, social isolation, and poor access to basic services (Srivatsava and Shahsikumar 2003). The abominable living conditions affect their health, and in several cases health expenditure wipes out a substantial part of their earnings (Pattenden 2012). Since there is no registration system and portable identity, they do not have access to health care, facilities for children's education, or access to even the public distribution system (Deshingkar and Start 2003). Many of the temporary migrants have dual livelihoods, earning in season in agriculture and moving for non-farm work in urban areas in the off-season (Coffey et al. 2011) and have stretched-out life worlds with families often left behind in the place of usual residence in villages (Rogaly and Susan 2012). A study focusing on slums finds it "difficult to assert that migrants have benefited significantly at the place of their destination".

India, which is known for making extensive laws regulating labor conditions, hardly has any legislative measures protecting the working and living conditions of temporary migrant labor, and the general laws on contract, minimum wages, payment of wages, maternity benefits and so on are hardly implemented in the case of migrant workers (Srivatsava 2005; Deshingkar and Akter 2009). Temporary migrant workers in India, being mostly in the informal sector, hardly have any basic social security measures like old-age pension, health and life insurance or employment security or unemployment allowance.

According to estimates based on NSSO data, in 2004–05 over 10% of non-agricultural workers resident in rural areas commuted to work in urban areas, as did another 10% who had no fixed place of work, meaning they also worked for sometime in urban areas. There was also urban-to-rural commuting by non-agricultural workers to the tune of over 4% of urban non-

agricultural workers (Mohanan 2008). Over the years, there has been an increase in the phenomenon of rural-urban and also urban-rural commuting for work. In 1993–94, only 6.34 million individuals were moving between rural and urban areas for work, but by 2009–10 about 12.42 million workers engaged in non-agricultural activities crossed the rural-urban boundaries every day (8.05 million rural-urban commuters and 4.37 million urban-rural commuters). In addition, 12.2 million non-agricultural workers reported not having a fixed place of work (Sharma and Chandrasekhar 2014), and it may not be wrong to assume that a substantial proportion of this group would also be moving between rural and urban areas. In China, for instance, the restrictions on migration to large cities appear to have attracted migrants to small towns within a small radius, and it was observed that the number of commuters was more important than the number of those who actually worked in their place of residence. A study of the Jiangsu Province in the mid-1980s shows that "daily commuting from surrounding rural villages accounted for up to 43 percent of the daytime urban population" (Satterthwaite and Tacoli 2007). In the context of emerging economies, there has been no systematic study on the factors influencing decisions in favor of commuting and the impact of these decisions. Some emphasize greater attention to access to services, work, and basic needs where people reside which would help in cutting down on time-consuming, energy-draining and disruptive movement. There is an equally strong argument that commuting would reduce pressure on small towns and, in turn, on the larger cities and at the same time enable the commuters to retain their links to local communities as well as part-time farming. Besides the labor market conditions, the role of public policy relating to transport facilities and basic needs is an important factor in commuting decisions.

The recent developments in the nature of urbanization in India—driven by small-town growth, the increasing rural-urban migration with the predominance of temporary or seasonal migration, the increasing share of rural and urban informal non-agricultural employment, the spillover of formal enterprises to rural areas, the growth of rural-urban and even urban-rural commuting for work and its vast potential in the context of small town–driven growth—present huge challenges and opportunities toward better employment and working and living conditions of the vast majority of labor who are drawn into the space of the rural-urban continuum in India. The challenges have aggravated over the years because of callous neglect and even certain antagonistic approaches to urbanization and migration.

In India's development planning, there had been a strong negative attitude toward urbanization for a long time and a total absence of any systematic policy toward migration. And often migration was treated as a source of urban problems. In the 1960s, the Planning Commission's Research Programmes Committee sponsored a survey of 21 cities with the specific objective of designing a strategy to control over-urbanization and migration (Bulsara 1964). In the 1960s, there was a dominant view that India was facing over-urbanization and that rapid urbanization was a threat to economic growth and would result in urban misery (Sovani 1966; Sharan 2006). On the contrary, there is growing evidence to show that urban poverty is not due to rural-to-urban migration. "Widely heard concerns about the urbanization of poverty in the developing world have been neither well informed nor cognizant of the broader economic role of urbanization in the process of overall poverty reduction" (Ravallion et al. 2007). All of the claims about rural poor flocking to the city and adding to poverty in urban areas are unfounded, and urban poverty is not a result of push factor (Hashim 2014). Furthermore, the evidence shows that poverty is not the key factor in migration (Kundu and Sarangi 2005). Owing to a lack of resources, the poorest, with the exception of bonded labor, cannot migrate. It is the relatively less poor and non-poor, even in the case of temporary or seasonal migration, who could access resources to move. Almost until the 10th Five Year Plan, the official attitude toward urbanization was negative and saw the process as a problem (Kundu 2014; Hashim 2014). For the first time, the Tenth Plan expresses concern that "the moderate pace of urbanization in the country has been a cause of disappointment", and it took the Eleventh Plan to accept the fact that "the degree of urbanization in India is one of the lowest in the world" (Planning Commission 2013).

Ironically, the recognition of the need for urbanization in the context of globalization and liberalization gave an entirely neoliberal turn to the newly evolving urban policy during the Tenth and Eleventh Plans which placed the thrust of the urban growth strategy onto "increasing the efficiency and productivity of cities by deregulation and development of land" and pleading for "dismantling public sector monopoly over urban infrastructure and creating conducive atmosphere for private sector investment" (Kundu 2011). There was a clear class bias and "elite capture" of the emerging urban policy and governance by segmentation of the affluent others of the city and by shifting of the poor in slums to periphery of cities from the core of the residential areas with gross inequalities in access to services. The new

urban policy, including the Jawaharlal Urban Renewal Mission, reflected a lack of integration of economic aspects such as livelihood with infrastructure issues such as housing and basic services and of infrastructure with social development such as shelter, security, basic services, and locational issues with access to and impact on health and education (Mahadevia and Sarkar 2012). There is a process of exclusionary urbanization with a hostile social environment to the working class, land-use restriction, evictions of petty business and production activities, and pressure exerted by better-off residents and courts to remove unplanned growth (Kundu et al. 2003). The result is that the working class in urban areas faces three serious vulnerabilities: residential, occupational and social. They face dismal basic infrastructure facilities like poor housing, drinking water, electricity and sanitary facilities (Hashim 2014). These conditions hold the potential for creating social conflict and instability, indicating the need for a change in policy for inclusive urbanization (Saxena 2014).

The most neglected are the small towns, which hardly figure on the radar of the present urban policy and have been deprived of resources. It is well established that the incidence of poverty is much higher in small towns. In 2009–10, poverty in metropolitan cities was relatively low at 14%, whereas in small towns with a population of less than 20,000 it was as high as 30%. The situation in small towns in less developed states in most cases is dehumanizing, and urban planning is almost non-existent (Hashim 2014).

While it took over five decades to accept the reality of the need for urbanization and launch an urban policy, in the case of migration even to this day there appears to be no clear sign of any move toward a policy. There are apprehensions that the government continues to see migration as having a negative impact by congesting urban space and crowding jobs. It is pointed out by the World Bank (2009) that current policies that prevail do not allow communities to fully capture the benefits of labor mobility, and, on the contrary, the measures to discourage migration through rural employment programs and create social barriers and hostile urban environment to the entry of poor migrants are cited as methods of countering migration. There are very few protective laws for migrant workers, and there is even a failure of implementation of some of the basic laws to ensure minimum conditions of work. Most of the migrants, especially the temporary workers, do not enjoy any formal social protection and at the same time are denied certain rural social welfare entitlements like access to the facility of public distribution system, cooking gas,

and even the Rashtriya Bima Yojana (health benefits) since there is no portable enforcement of these measures. The present urban strategies, along with the social barriers and hostile elite capture of urban facilities and development, make it difficult for migrant workers to gain a firm foothold in the urban economic and social space.

Concluding Observations

It may be helpful to begin by recalling the template on which this chapter started: that India is home of the largest share of the rural population in the world and it is also home of the second largest share of urban population in the world and this unique position is not likely to change for decades to come. But what has been happening between the rural-urban spaces by way of interaction in terms of generation of employment, income, wealth and distribution is undergoing fast change and is likely to be critical in the immediate context of development as much as in the future. In this evolving process, urbanization and migration are the two legs to walk the progress along the rural-urban continuum. Accordingly, urban and migration policies should reflect a cohesiveness as part of an overall vision of development. Of late, urbanization in India has also acquired certain unique features driven by the growth of small towns. It is clearly a kind of gradation and not a divide of the rural-urban continuum (Chatterjee et al. 2015). In a vast country like India, the emergence of such a large number of small towns across the length and breadth of the space interspersed by rural settlements is a great advantage in promoting a balanced development of urbanization with large cities and small towns as integral parts that facilitate the ease of mobility of resources, including human resources. From the point of view of employment, there are, as shown earlier, clear trends of formal manufacturing sector units moving away from urban into rural locations while informal sector units are moving from rural to urban locations, and the secular trend for India's manufacturing urbanization has slowed down (Ghani et al. 2012). It is here that the small-town network and the importance of localized development of infrastructure, education and basic civic amenities assume high priority.

The approach to migration in India justifies the criticism that migration has been overlooked in the overall economic development strategy, that there is a discernible negative attitude of the government, and that current policies do not allow communities to fully capture the benefits of labor mobility (World Bank 2009). The result is that migrants often end up as

victims of the development process. But the basic question is how to turn migrants, whose contribution to development is not only significant but also essential, into gainers of the development process. There is a need for a comprehensive migration policy that incorporates certain basic requirements to ensure decent work and living conditions with a focus from the bottom of temporary migrants up to others: first, to evolve a human development approach to migrants by creating education and skill development facilities both at the source and destination areas to improve the capabilities (UNDP 2009); second, to ensure legislative measures to protect migrants' rights and basic needs; third, to evolve appropriate welfare policies that would ensure location-specific entitlements to social sciences, housing subsidies, food rations and other public amenities. The path toward decent work and better living across the rural-urban continuum lies in the effective design and implementation of these policies.

Notes

1. The definition of urbanization adopted in India is considered restrictive since it uses three-dimensional criteria involving not only size of population but also density and occupation. A place is classified as urban if the size of population is 5000 or more, the density is 400 people or more per square kilometer, and at least 75% of male workers are in non-agriculture. In many countries, "urban" definition of a place has a much lower population size and often no other criteria.
2. "Census town" is defined as a settlement which fulfills all three criteria of urban settlement but is not statutorily declared as a "Municipal town" or a "statutory town". Census towns are governed by Panchayats, but the population is treated as a part of the urban population.
3. The terms temporary, seasonal, or circular migration are often used synonymously. Of these three terms, "temporary" is a preferred term because, besides accommodating both "seasonal" and "circular" notions, it takes into account longer periods than what is implied by a season. Increasingly, temporary migrations are periods which are for ten months or more.

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