A Global Town in Central Gujarat, India: Rural–Urban Connections and International Migration

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Towns have been described as nodes of rural−urban mobility, while megacities have been described as hubs of international mobility. This paper uses the term 'global town' to describe a town as a hub of rural−urban and transnational migration. It draws attention to the connection between regional power dynamics, transnational migrants' ties with their home region, and urban transformation. Regionally-dominant groups can use a town to reproduce their rural power base, while less powerful communities can use a town to seek refuge from violence and marginalisation. These processes crucially affect the experiences of transnational migrants, who also participate in the transformation of the town when they 'return home' and buy property there, particularly after retirement. Our use of the term 'global town' is illustrated through a case study of Anand, Gujarat.

Keywords: Rural−urban; town; migration; global; Gujarat; India; Patel; Vohra

Introduction

Recent discussions on globalisation, transnationalism and urbanisation in South Asia are mostly biased towards large urban settlements and megacities.[1] From the viewpoint of globalisation studies, big cities are seen as vital nodes in the world economy which have acquired a key strategic role in leading economic sectors.[2] From the viewpoint of scholars who deal with issues of transnationalism, large urban centres are locations of return migration and flows of investments and ideas.[3] With the buzzword, 'global city',[4] guiding scholarship for more than ten years now, there are quantitative and qualitative reasons to pay equal attention to the rise of 'global towns'.

Almost half of the 3.9 billion urban population in the world resides in relatively small settlements with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants and this percentage will be around 45 percent in 2030.[5] Studies on these small and middle-sized towns in India have emphasised their role as nodal points within the regional or national economy, whereby towns act as 'nodes' or 'hubs' within a rural−urban continuum of economic development. Small and middle-sized towns

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[1] See, in this volume, Timothy J. Scrase, Mario Rutten, Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase and Trent Brown, 'Beyond the Metropolis—Regional Globalisation and Town Development in India: An Introduction', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 38, no. 2 (June 2015).

[2] Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[3] Biao Xiang, Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Mika Toyota, *Return: Nationalizing Transnational Mobility in Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

[4] Sassen, *The Global City*.

[5] See http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html, accessed 3 Mar. 2015.

have been described as bridges linking the agrarian sector in the rural hinterland with the industrial and trading sectors in the urban centre through the provision of services, manufacturing and markets for agricultural products. Overall, these studies have argued that small and medium towns have been pivotal in development processes in India.[6]

More critical analyses have also pointed at the 'hub' or 'node' position of towns, but have emphasised that these towns act as a drain on the rural economy, facilitate exploitation and strengthen class differentiation. Earlier studies showed how regionally-dominant groups use towns to reproduce their agrarian and rural power bases by extending their influence over the local economy and politics.[7] This is confirmed by more recent studies, which show how rural elites have turned towns into focal points of their regional dominance by accessing urban jobs through education while holding on to traditional resources such as land in the village.[8] Through their successful straddling of the urban−rural divide, elites keep control over their rural property by maintaining their home base in the village, while affirming their economic and political power in town through participation in urbanisation.[9]

Different views are projected on how the growth of towns in rural areas might affect local power relations. On the one hand, it has been argued that the widening availability of (higher) education and non-agricultural employment has allowed groups that were previously marginalised to experience a process of economic and social upward mobility,[10] which results in changes in caste-based relationships.[11] This process has been associated with urbanisation[12] and with the ability of marginalised groups to gain self-worth through participation in higher education.[13] On the other hand, regional elites also maintain networks of power that bridge rural and urban areas by cultivating relations with key social contacts in towns and villages,

[6] Binod Chand Agrawal, 'Cultural Factors in Political Decision-Making: A Small Town Election in India', in *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 6, no. 8 (Feb. 1971), pp. 495−502; Lauren Anita Corwin, 'The Rural Town: Minimal Urban Center', in *Urban Anthropology*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (Spring 1977), pp. 23−43; F.M. Dahlberg, 'The Provincial Town', in *Urban Anthropology*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (Fall 1974), pp. 171−83; Lalta Prasad, *The Growth of a Small Town: A Sociological Study of Ballia, U.P.* (New Delhi: Naurang Rai, 1985); P. Rana and G. Krishan, 'Growth of Medium Sized Towns in India', in *GeoJournal*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (1981), pp. 33−9; and E. Johnson, *The Organisation of Space in Developing Countries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

[7] Joan Vincent, 'Room for Manoeuvre: The Political Role of Small Towns in East Africa', in Maxwell Owusu (ed.), *Colonialism and Change: Essays Presented to Lucy Mair* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1975), pp. 115−43; M. Schatzberg, 'Islands of Privilege: Small Cities in Africa and the Dynamics of Class Formation', in *Urban Anthropology*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (1979), pp. 173−90; Barbara Harriss, *Transitional Trade and Rural Development: The Nature and Role of Agricultural Trade in a South Indian District* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1981); John Harriss, *Capitalism and Peasant Farming: Agrarian Structure and Ideology in Northern Tamil Nadu* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Richard G. Fox, 'Family, Caste and Commerce in a North Indian Market Town', in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 15, no. 3 (April 1967), pp. 297−314.

[8] Craig Jeffrey, '"A Fist Is Stronger than Five Fingers": Caste and Dominance in Rural North India', in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 26, no. 2 (2001), pp. 217−36.

[9] K.L. Sharma, 'The Social Organisation of Urban Space: A Case Study of Chanderi, a Small Town in Central India', in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 37, no. 3 (2003), pp. 405−27; and Elisabetta Basile and Barbara Harriss-White, 'Corporative Capitalism: Civil Society and the Politics of Accumulation in Small Town India' (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000, QEH Working Paper Series, no. 38).

[10] Vinay Gidwani, *Capital, Interrupted: Agrarian Development and the Politics of Work in India* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. xix.

[11] Craig Jeffrey, '"A Fist Is Stronger than Five Fingers"', p. 226.

[12] Christophe Jaffrelot, 'The Uneven Erosion of Caste in the Politics of Gujarat (India)', lecture given at the Gujarat Research Network Seminar, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 11 Sept. 2014.

[13] Craig Jeffrey, Patricia Jeffery and Roger Jeffery, '"A Useless Thing!" or "Nectar of the Gods?": The Cultural Production of Education and Young Men's Struggles for Respect in Liberalizing North India', in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 94, no. 4 (Dec. 2004), p. 971.

producing 'networks and private spaces that express and reinforce caste and class advantage',[14] rendering ineffective progressive politics and regulations that seek to improve the position of marginalised groups in society. While there is still more research to be done on the position of elites in towns in rural areas, we know much less of how socially-marginalised groups experience their engagement with these towns.

Although a renewed interest in the study of small and middle-sized towns counteracts the overall 'metrocentricity' in urban research,[15] most studies still project a limited view on the 'hub' function of towns, emphasising their role as nodal points within the regional or national context only.[16] Little is known about the role of towns within the global context, as nodes connecting regions within India to developments at the global level. This especially applies to towns located in regions with strong patterns of international migration. In these regions, small and middle-sized towns act as central nodes through which transnational flows of people, money, investments and knowledge transit in the form of return visits and the channelling of resources back home.[17] Such flows have significant effects on the towns as new investments, forms of social action and cultural activities expand and transform local society, and new institutions and structures emerge to service these flows.[18]

How have towns in India become 'global towns', that is, hubs of regional and global mobility at the same time, providing a local base for the outflow and inflow of people, goods, money and ideas? How do the people who participate in the process of urbanisation in such towns use and cultivate regional and global networks? And, as people's position in a town cannot be fully grasped unless power dynamics are taken into account, how do regionally-dominant and marginalised groups experience their relation with the town differently?

Drawing on the case of Anand, an urban conglomerate in central Gujarat, India, with a population of just over 200,000 residents,[19] this paper discusses the way in which a middle-sized town in an agricultural region acts as a node of interconnection between rural−urban and local−global mobility. Anand is the economic, administrative and educational centre of an agriculturally developed region with strong rural−urban linkages. Besides being a regional hub, the town is also a nodal point of international migration, providing a platform for departure and arrival of various forms of return flows from abroad of people, goods and money.[20]

This paper shows how Anand town has been transformed by its local and global interconnections and how these transformations have been experienced. It is based on long-term research among the Patel (Hindu) caste, a regionally-dominant group, and among the Vohra (Muslim) community, part of a socially-marginalised group in the region. For members

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of the Patel community, whose social and economic regional dominance originates in the surrounding villages, the development of Anand town exemplifies their socially upward mobility and class reproduction, being a site of economic and educational investment. To those Patels who have migrated abroad, the town is a location of return and a symbol of the global mobility of the community, without having turned into a home town. For the Vohras, whose origins also lie in villages and towns in the direct vicinity of Anand, the town has historically been a site of escape from violence and marginalisation and an important place of settlement and investment. They see Anand as a safe place for Muslims and as the centre of the Vohra community in the region, and this perspective is also shared by Vohras living abroad. Overall, the case of Anand shows how towns can operate as hubs of both rural−urban and local−global mobility, and how the transformative processes that result from this are experienced differently by members of socially-dominant as compared to socially-marginalised communities.

Regional Centre and Global Town

[Anand] is one special type of town: it is not so big, not so small. The location of this town is very important because the Ahmedabad-to-Bombay railway and a national highway pass through it. (Quote from interview with a local journalist)[21]

This place, Anand. . .is exporting people like anything. [It] has many people who are living abroad. (Local social worker)

Anand town is the centre of the economically well-developed region of central Gujarat. The region is characterised by a high population density and a well-developed rural sector, based on a long-term process of agricultural commercialisation, a process which stimulated industrialisation and diversification of the rural economy. It is well connected by roads, highways and railway lines to the large cities of Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Mumbai. Anand is the capital of Anand district and forms the centre of this typical 'rurban' or 'peri-urban' region in which town and wider rural environment are closely connected.

Anand town is a hub that provides services to the rural hinterland and a node of transport in a network of villages and other towns. There is a large inflow and outflow of people from the region on a daily basis: commuters and students travelling from nearby villages to work or school; people who come to visit relatives and friends, to do business, to buy goods or to visit restaurants or cinema halls. Such frequent mobility within the region is facilitated by a dense network of cemented roads and public transport networks that connect the villages and rural towns in the district.

Even before the start of British rule in the early nineteenth century, the rural economy of Anand district was already commercially oriented with tobacco and cotton as the main crops. After Independence, an acceleration of this early process of economic development took place when the so-called Green Revolution resulted in further increases in productivity in agriculture and agro-industry. This included dairy production, engineering companies that manufactured and repaired agricultural machinery, industries that manufactured bricks and cement products for irrigation works and the building industry, and mechanical and electrical engineering companies. Major stimuli for the agro-industrial and industrial development in

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[21] All interviews cited in this paper, except where specifically indicated otherwise, took place in central Gujarat between 2010 and 2013. Interviews with Patels were conducted by Mario Rutten, interviews with Vohras by Sanderien Verstappen.

Anand and its surrounds during that time were the establishment of the Kheda District Milk Producers Union or Amul Dairy Co-Operative in 1946, the large-scale industrial enterprise, Elecon, in 1960, and the Vitthal Udyognagar Industrial Estate in 1965.

The population growth of Anand town after Independence was partly the result of Anand's position as a centre of education and public administration in the region. With the establishment of the Sardar Patel University in 1955 and the subsequent development of the university township of Vallabh Vidyanagar, the number of high schools and educational institutions increased rapidly, along with hostels, staff quarters and other facilities to cater to the rising population of students and staff members. In 2014, Sardar Patel University alone had more than 25,000 students spread over 26 postgraduate departments and 87 affiliated colleges. On top of that, there are more than 125 secondary/high schools in the combined town of Anand-Vidyanagar and its attached villages.

Along with the increase in educational facilities, the public sector has expanded significantly over the past two decades. With the administrative division of the larger Kheda district into two separate districts in 1997, Anand town became the capital of the newly-established Anand district. This led to an increase in government offices and administrative jobs, construction activities and businesses that catered to the expanding public sector.

These developments in the educational and public sectors resulted in the immigration of new residents into Anand town, both rural-to-urban migrants from nearby villages and urban-to-urban migration from elsewhere in Gujarat and India. As a consequence, the real-estate sector in Anand town experienced a boom, especially since the mid 1990s, with fast-rising housing prices, large-scale conversions of agricultural land and the construction of new housing societies. It also resulted in the administrative expansion of Anand through the inclusion of adjoining villages and the establishment of new settlements on the outskirts of the town, providing the middle classes a suburban lifestyle. Where Anand was still a small, 10-km-wide rural town in the 1950s with a population of only 25,767 residents,[22] it has today grown into the wider 'urban conglomerate of Anand', having a total population of more than 200,000.[23]

Anand is not only a local hub in an economically well-developed and highly mobile region, it also acts as a nodal point of international mobility, hosting services that facilitate migration abroad and that attract return flows of people, goods, money and investment to the region. Central Gujarat is one of the regions in India with a long history of migration abroad. Since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people from this region have migrated to East Africa, benefitting from the job opportunities provided by British colonial rule. From the mid 1960s onwards, Britain became the main destination of migration. After the early 1970s, the migration partially shifted to the USA and Canada, while in more recent times, the region has witnessed the emergence of several new destinations for migration such as Australia and the Gulf countries.

Along with the growing diversity in destinations of migration, there has been a shift in the migration pattern. In contrast with the early migrants from central Gujarat who migrated through family, caste and village networks, the more recent migrants leave through agents on temporary work and student visas. In Anand and its surroundings, there are 33 visa

[22] Shri Umyashankar Jivanlal Thakar, 'Anand Town', in Purushotam C. Shah and Chandrakandh F. Shah (eds), *Charotar Sarvasangra* (Nadiad: Parekh Kevdachand Kanjibhai and Sons, 1954), pp. 8−13. Translation of this section from Gujarati to English by Minaz Pathan, Anand, 11 Mar. 2012.

[23] Officially now included in Anand's urban conglomerate are Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gamdi, Mogri, Vitthal Udyognagar, Karamsad and parts of Bakrol and Jitodiya. See Census of India 2011 [http://censusindia.gov.in/, accessed 2 Jan. 2015].

FIGURE 1. Billboards of visa agents, Anand, 2012.
Source: © Mario Rutten.

consultancy agents, most of them located in one of the shopping areas or bazaars. Along the main roads of Anand, especially near the Sardar Patel University area, visa agents' billboards advertise their services to help students gain admission to foreign colleges (Figure 1). As a result, education has become an important and fast way to go abroad for many youngsters in central Gujarat.[24]

Migrants from central Gujarat have historically maintained ties with their home region. Many of the early settlers in East Africa made regular visits home, while some returned to the region after their retirement. With the increase in communication means and the retirement of the first generation of migrants in Britain and USA/Canada, circular migration through frequent visits to the home region increased after the 1980s. Some of these migrants travel to Gujarat every winter for stays of two to four months and buy a house here specifically for this purpose. As one travels along the outskirts of Anand town, it is impossible to escape the overwhelming presence of newly-built housing society developments (Figures 2 and 3). Big billboards along the roads promote the attractiveness of buying property here, either an apartment in a high-rise building or a bungalow in a suburban housing society development, some of which even include a gym, a swimming pool and a children's playground.

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[24] Mario Rutten and Sanderien Verstappen, 'Middling Migration: Contradictory Mobility Experiences of Indian Youth in London', in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 40, no. 8 (2014), p. 1221. See also Pieter Lagerwaard, 'The Organisation of Migration: Migration Industry and Social Networks in Anand, Gujarat (India)', in *Provincial Globalisation Research Report*, No. 4 (Dec. 2012) [http://www.provglo.org/research_re ports, accessed 13 Mar. 2015].

FIGURE 2. Investments in real estate by overseas Gujaratis, Anand, 2010.
Source: © Mario Rutten.

FIGURE 3. Investments in real estate by overseas Gujaratis, Anand, 2013.
Source: © Mario Rutten.

Following the large amount of real-estate investment by migrants over the past few decades, Anand town has increasingly turned into a global hub for transnational migrants from abroad. In response, the number of luxury shops, retail malls, restaurants and real-estate brokers has increased significantly. Today, migrants can find restaurants and shops that serve coffee and sandwiches to their taste, including Café Coffee Day and Subway outlets, and they can shop in fashion stores of international brands such as Levi's or Wrangler, Sony or Lenovo. Anand has become a favourite location of return for migrants, having the same facilities as a major city like Vadodara or Ahmedabad, while not being as congested or expensive.

> Anand is smaller than Ahmedabad, but the lifestyle is comparable. Daily necessities you can get in Anand like in Ahmedabad and also facilities like cinemas and shopping centres. It is peaceful and there is no stress. . . . Ahmedabad is a metro city, overcrowded. Here in Anand it is comfortable. . .land and houses are cheaper. (Migrant from UK, interviewed in Anand)

In sum, the town of Anand is both a local hub in an economically well-developed region and a nodal point of international migration, providing a base for outward mobility and a point of return for various flows of people, goods and investments from abroad. How do residents of the region and their relatives abroad experience their engagement with the global town? And how are these experiences shaped by their social position in the region? The two following sections argue that the town of Anand as a hub of local and global mobility has been experienced differently by members of the regionally-dominant Patel community as compared to the Vohras, who are part of a religious minority in central Gujarat.

Social Mobility and Global Return

The Charotar region of Gujarat has been described as 'the pleasant land of the Patidar caste',[25] or by local residents as 'the heartland of the Patels'. The Patels are an upwardly-mobile, middle-ranking landowning peasant Hindu caste that has a presence in several regions of Gujarat, but is mainly concentrated in the Charotar tract of Kheda and Anand districts in central Gujarat.[26] The Patels have acquired economic, social and political dominance since the early part of the twentieth century,[27] the outcome of a long process of economic progress and upward social mobility of former self-employed cultivator peasants who were by far the greatest beneficiaries of the institutional reforms and technological changes that took place in agriculture after Independence. Despite being a demographic minority of about 20 percent of the population in Anand district, the Patels had by far the largest share of land at the end of the 1960s.[28]

Over time, Patel farmers diversified their economic interests by entering new activities such as money-lending and marketing of agricultural products, based on their economic

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[25] David Pocock, *Kanbi and Patidar: A Study of the Patidar Community of Gujarat* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 5.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] David Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat: Kheda District 1917−1934* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981); and Mario Rutten, *Farms and Factories: Social Profile of Large Farmers and Rural Industrialists in West India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[28] R.M. Patel, *Glimpses of Change and Development in Borsad Taluke (Kheda District, Gujarat)* (Vallabh Vidyanagar: Agro-Economic Research Centre, 1983, Indian Studies, no. 4), p. 27.

progress in agriculture. Already by the 1950s, some Patel families in central Gujarat managed small, joint-family 'empires' of trade and agriculture.[29] In the 1960s and 1970s, the tendency to establish economic activities outside farming further extended to include industrial undertakings in regional towns such as Anand and its newly-established industrial estate of Vitthal Udyognagar. By 1975−76, 50 percent of the entrepreneurs in Anand district (then Anand *taluka*) engaged in manufacturing and processing industries belonged to the Patel community.[30] Along with their economic rise, the Patels went through a period of upward political mobility in the course of the twentieth century. During the Independence movement, they asserted themselves as a community[31] and, between the 1950s and the 1970s, they were actively involved in both Congress and anti-Congress Party activities[32] and, more recently, as supporters of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The establishment of high schools in the region from the 1950s onwards was entwined with this process of upward mobility. Until recently, members of the Patel families relied on the availability of primary and secondary education in their own villages. Since the 1970s−1980s, as their situation improved in terms of wealth and mobility, there has been a tendency among rural middle-class families within the Patel community to send their children to private educational institutions in one of the urban centres in the region. Following their upward economic and social mobility, they began to establish high schools and colleges in the town of Anand, particularly in Vallabh Vidyanagar. Managed and partly funded by donations from Patels, the names of these institutes highlight Patel dominance: D.N. High School (named after Dadabhai Naoroji Patel), Shree V.J. Patel Higher Secondary School, N.S. Patel Arts College, M.B. Patel Science College and the Sardar Patel University, the last named after India's first minister of home affairs, Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai (Sardar) Patel, who was a Patel from a village near Anand.

Over the past decades, rural Patel children have increasingly pursued higher education in Anand. The rationale for urban education has been to provide the children with both an educational and a socio-cultural background which would help them acquire contacts among the urban middle class, to find work outside agriculture, and to set up non-agricultural businesses in the future. For this purpose, Patel associations have established student hostels in the town to provide housing, food and supervision to Patel youth from rural areas.

Over time, some Patel families bought houses in Anand, particularly in Vallabh Vidyanagar, to which part of the family moved to enable their children and those of relatives from the village to pursue higher education. In the 1950s and 1960s, migration by members of the rural-based Patel community from their villages of origin to Anand and other towns in central Gujarat increased substantially.[33] This rural−urban mobility within the Patel community was partly related to the recognition of education as a valuable addition to family 'property'.

Ashok and Suresh Patel are two brothers from a village in Anand district. Fifteen years ago, the brothers decided to send their children to the D.N. High School and the N.S. Patel Arts College in Anand. To facilitate this, the family bought a bungalow in Anand, where

[29] David Pocock, 'The Base of Faction in Gujerat', in *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 8, no. 4 (Dec. 1957), pp. 301−4.

[30] T.K. Moulik, S.K. Basu and M.S. Patel, *Rural Entrepreneurship; Motivations and Constraints (A Study in Anand Taluka, Gujarat)* (Ahmedabad: Centre for Management in Agriculture, 1978, Monograph no. 70), p. 27.

[31] Hardiman, *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat*.

[32] J.R. Wood, 'The Political Integration of British and Princely Gujarat: The Historical−Political Dimension of Indian State Policies', PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1973, pp. 329−32.

[33] J.M. Trivedi, *The Social Structure of Patidar Caste in India* (Delhi: Kanishka Publishing House, 1992), pp. 33−4.

Suresh lives with his wife and their own children, taking care of Ashok's children too. When we asked Suresh about their reasons for sending their children to schools in Anand, he answered:

> Private schools and colleges in Anand have a good reputation and their standard of education is high. Besides, our children will be able to meet children from good families there. This might be good for our business and it will help our sons later when they will take over or set up a new business for themselves. As Anand is only twenty minutes by car, this change will not affect the management of our family business.

This example of Ashok and Suresh illustrates the recent tendency among middle-class Patel families to shift their residence away from the village to new and distinct geographical locations in the nearby town of Anand. By urbanising themselves and thereby reproducing their regional dominance, members of the Patel community stretch a long-existing pattern of diversification: maintaining their economic embeddedness and family roots in the village and in agricultural land while also establishing themselves in newly-emerging sectors and urban localities, partly through the establishment of non-agricultural activities, partly through the pursuance of higher education and attempts to enter the urban professions.

Anand has thus become a place of education, work and residence for Patels and a place where they flaunt their wealth through real estate. Among Patel youth in the villages, Anand has also become a place where they can hang around without being monitored by their relatives. Young Patel men especially prefer to have their get-togethers outside their village, visiting Anand during part of the day or evening. There, they can display behaviour they would never show at home or with family members around. Strictly vegetarian and teetotal at home, they take to drinking and eating chicken when outside and in each other's company, and can have illicit relationships with girls.[34] As a result, Anand's reputation as an educational town is also often associated with permissive student life among the village populations:

> Liquor and cigarettes are used by students in Anand...instead of studying and doing some meaningful work, they hang around.... Many students have a boyfriend or girlfriend. (An elderly Patel villager)

Although rural−urban mobility has been a relatively recent phenomenon, migration outside the region and even abroad has a longer history. From the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries onwards, family members of Patel businessmen migrated to other states of India to trade in the locally-produced bidi tobacco. Some migrated to foreign countries, especially Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, particularly between the 1920s and 1950s. Through caste-based networks, Patels took up white-collar clerical occupations in the British colonial administration in East Africa or became involved in commercial activities.[35]

Patels who settled in East Africa maintained ties with their home region: they regularly transferred money, sent their children to Gujarat for education, made occasional visits to their

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[34] Fieke Jägers, 'Regulated Independence. Female Students Living in Hostels in Central Gujarat, India', ProGlo Research Report No. 5 (Bangalore: National Institute of Advanced Studies/Amsterdam: Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, 2013).

[35] Pocock, *Kanbi and Patidar*; and M.B. Desai, *The Rural Economy of Gujarat* (Bombay: Oxford University Press/University of Bombay Publications, Economics Series No. 2, 1948), pp. 18, 141; and Harald Tambs-Lyche, *London Patidars: A Case Study in Urban Ethnicity* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 35−40.

home village, and often returned after retirement.[36] Up to the early 1960s, Patel migrants made substantial donations to educational institutions in their home village and invested part of their newly-acquired wealth in land, agricultural production and real estate.[37] On the whole, Patel migrants in East Africa had a strong orientation towards their home villages in terms of economic and social linkages and also in terms of their actual presence in the villages during return visits.

Since the 1980s, when the UK and USA became new destination countries, migrants' attention has shifted from the home village to Anand town. Among these Patels, a practice emerged of retired migrants who regularly stay in central Gujarat during the winter. These visiting migrants and returnees do not usually stay in their home villages, but live in their own apartments or bungalows in one of the towns of central Gujarat, of which Anand is the most popular destination. As a result, investments in urban real estate in Anand are popular among Patel migrants. Some of them have bought multiple houses or flats in the town, one of which they live in during their stay in the region, the others are kept for investment purposes.

Properties owned by Patel migrants make up a significant proportion of the large number of newly-built housing society developments and high-rise apartment buildings on the outskirts of Anand's urban conglomerate. In certain instances, more than 50 percent of the houses in a society are owned by migrants. This has spurred the construction boom in the town and the rise in land prices. The first housing society to cater especially to migrants in Anand, Vaishnav Township, was constructed on the outskirts of Anand in 1991. Vaishnav Township is a gated community surrounded by a high wall and employs a manager, two guards and a gardener. Out of the sixty bungalows, 56 are owned by Patel migrant families. Mukesh Patel is the owner of one of the bungalows:

> In 1991, such a project was a new thing. I remember how a developer visited London to sell the properties. He said that the whole thing would look like a suburb in California. I was one of the first to buy a bungalow. Since I am retired, my wife and I come and stay here for a few months almost every year. It's so peaceful here and it's near to my father's home village.

Migrants from the Patel community keep strong connections to their home villages by visiting relatives, sending remittances and making donations to local social and religious initiatives.[38] At the same time, they increasingly resist living with their relatives as they would have done in the past. They have started to favour Anand as the place of 'return' over their home villages. This is partly related to their negative experiences in the village during their return visits, experiences that are sometimes related to conflicts over family property. Local residents

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[36] Pocock, *Kanbi and Patidar*, p. 71; and G.C. Wenger, V. Burholt, P. Dave, I. Mallya, N.S. Sodhi, A.A. Biswas and S. Soneja, 'Rural Communities in Gujarat and Punjab (India) and Sylhet (Bangladesh): The Impact of Emigration on Older People' (London: Comparative Report, DFID, 2003), p. 6 [http://www.research4development.info/PDF/Outputs/Mis_SPC/R7655comparativeruralreport.pdf, accessed 23 Jul. 2011].

[37] Pocock, *Kanbi and Patidar*, p. 63; Desai, *The Rural Economy of Gujarat*, pp. 18, 141; V.P. Chandra, 'Remigration: Return of the Prodigals, an Analysis of the Impact of the Cycles of Migration and Remigration on Caste Mobility', in *International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, no. 1 (1997), pp. 162−70; and Howard L. Erdman, *Political Attitudes of Indian Industry: A Case Study of the Baroda Business Elite* (London: The Athlone Press, 1971), p. 163.

[38] Natascha Dekkers and Mario Rutten, 'Diaspora Philanthropy from a Homeland Perspective: Reciprocity and Contestation over Donations in Central Gujarat, India', ProGlo Working Paper No. 2 (Bangalore: National Institute of Advanced Studies/Amsterdam: Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, 2011) [http://www.provglo.org/working-papers/diaspora-philanthropy-homeland-perspective-reciprocity-and-contestation-over-donation, accessed 13 Mar. 2015].

regularly criticise the behaviour and attitude of the migrants, emphasising that they are loosening their ties with the village and behave arrogantly, looking down on the local population. These negative feelings about migrants are so widespread that they have become part of public knowledge, which migrants pick up on during their visits to central Gujarat. This was illustrated by a 2013 article in the local newspaper, *Divya Bhaskar*, in which the author refers to the local interpretation of NRI (Non-Resident Indian) as 'Non-Reliable Indian'.[39] The article was pointed out to us by a Patel migrant to illustrate the lack of respect migrants receive in their villages of origin. This social tension is one reason for their lack of enthusiasm to stay in their village of origin. Another reason for them shifting their attention to the town is the inconvenience and lack of privacy they experience living with relatives in the village. As a result, Patel migrants prefer to buy property in a suburban settlement at the edges of Anand's urban conglomerate and spend most of their time in town. While the luxurious housing societies and upscale shopping areas of Anand and Vallabh Vidyanagar have become a symbol of the Patels' global mobility, they nevertheless maintain links with their villages of origin, which they always refer to as their home villages.

Uprooted But At Home

As one approaches Anand from the main road that connects it to the cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara, a high bridge offers a view of a widespread residential area with a multitude of mosques and churches. This area is referred to by the residents of Anand as a 'Muslim area', although Muslims share the area with Christians and some (mainly poor) Hindus. Charotar Sunni Vohras are the single largest caste/community here. They are a local Muslim community that traces its ancestry to villages and towns in the Charotar region. Charotar Sunni Vohras (from now on referred to as Vohras) have traditionally been involved in agricultural trade, agro-industry and the selling of goods in local markets, and have also benefitted from employment opportunities in the growing service sector and bureaucracy in the region. Vohras at home and abroad have directed their attention to Anand town in response to the process of urbanisation, displacement and resettlement and due to Anand's special position in the region as a safety zone for Muslims during the riots in Gujarat in 2002.

Anand has long been a centre for religious minorities in central Gujarat. Muslims and Christians have benefitted from the presence of educational institutions there and from the growth of the service sector and the bureaucracy, which has allowed them to access government jobs and other white-collar occupations. In 1893, the Catholic Church began its mission from Gamdi[40] and offered lower-caste Hindus of central Gujarat the opportunity to escape poverty and caste oppression in the villages by conversion, education and resettlement in the town. In the 1920s, Muslim (Deoband) scholars established themselves in Anand and started a religious reform movement among the Sunni Muslims of the region.

After 2002, the Muslim population in Anand probably doubled and the number of mosques increased from 25 (in 2002) to 51 (in 2012). In February 2002, large mobs of a thousand or more people attacked Muslims in Hindu-majority villages across Gujarat, burning and looting Muslim houses and shops, raping, maiming and killing.[41] The violence continued for a period

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[39] Vidyut Joshi (trans. Mario Rutten), 'Binnivasi Gujaratinu Drait' ('Dualism of Non-Resident Gujaratis'), *Divya Bhaskar* (Ahmedabad) (3 Feb. 2013), p. 3 (Sunday supplement).
[40] St. Xavier's Church, Anand [http://www.xavierchurchanand.com/#!about/cipy, accessed 29 Jan. 2014].
[41] Smita Narula, 'Compounding Injustice: The Government's Failure to Redress Massacres in Gujarat', *Human Rights Watch*, Vol. 15, no. 4 (C) (2002), pp. 1–13 [http://www.hrw.org/node/12314/section/1, accessed 12 Mar. 2015].

of approximately three months, affecting a total of 151 towns and 993 villages. Anand district was among the eight districts where violence was most intense.[42] However, amidst the turmoil, Anand town remained relatively quiet, although some shops were burned and one lethal fight was recorded in the old town centre.[43] Muslims in Anand believe that the main reason for their relative safety was that they live in close proximity to each other in a Muslim-majority area, which the mobs did not dare enter. Anand's northeastern outskirts were thus marked as a 'safe place' for Muslims and attracted many refugees during this period.[44]

After the violence died down, some refugees returned to their villages, while others decided to stay in Anand permanently. For the poor and destitute among the new arrivals, special housing societies were constructed by non-government organisations (NGOs), community associations and religious organisations.[45] Those who could afford it bought a bungalow in the suburban areas of Anand, some of which developed specifically to accommodate the relocation of Muslims. Anand also attracted Muslims not directly affected by the riots, among them middle-class families who had been planning to make the move for a long time with the intention of pursuing education, urban employment and an urban lifestyle.

This influx of Muslims was concentrated in the parts of Anand that already hosted a considerable Muslim community. This was paired with a process of increasing segregation on the basis of religious dividing lines, as middle-class Hindus and Christians started to sell their houses in these areas to Muslim buyers. Today, Anand is home to Muslims with diverse social-economic, caste and community backgrounds and with a variety of religious beliefs and practices. Residents believe that 50 percent of the Muslims in Anand are of the Vohra community, while the other 50 percent are a 'mix' of various other communities. This is why Anand is emerging as a regional centre, not just of Muslims in central Gujarat, but particularly of the Vohra community.[46] This was expressed by a member of the Vohra caste association, who holds office in Anand, who jokingly said:

> Anand is the Makkah of Vohras. Before, Vohras were happy in their villages. After 2002, so many have come to Anand. Nowadays, nobody wants to invest in the village anymore. Everybody wants to invest in Anand town.

What contributes to the sense of comfort of living in Anand is that the town is still very much connected to the hinterland and residents keep straddling the rural−urban divide from their safe residential bases in Anand. This is in contrast to other Muslim-majority areas in Indian

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[42] *Profile of Internal Displacement: India*. Compilation of information available in the Global IDP Database of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Geneva, 2004, p. 44 [http://www.idpproject.org, accessed 2 Jan. 2015].

[43] *The Times of India* records, Anand district, courtesy Raheel Dhattiwala; and Raheel Dhattiwala and Michael Biggs, 'The Political Logic of Ethnic Violence. The Anti-Muslim Pogrom in Gujarat, 2002', in *Politics & Society*, Vol. 40, no. 4 (Dec. 2012), pp. 483−516.

[44] According to the Government of Gujarat, at least 104,318 people had sought refuge in relief camps across Gujarat by 28 April 2002, two months after the violence started; human rights organisations estimate the number of displaced people was higher. See 'Acts of Commission, Acts of Omission. Housing and Land Rights and the Indian State, Report to The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights', Habitat International Coalition—Housing and Land Rights Network, New Delhi, 2004, p. 24 [http://www.hic-sarp.org/documents/HIC-1.pdf, accessed 8 Feb. 2014].

[45] 'Gujarat's Internally Displaced: Ten Years Later. The 2012 Survey of Gujarat's IDP Colonies' (Ahmedabad: Janvikas, 2012) [http://janvikas.in/download/status-rep.pdf, accessed 12 Mar. 2015].

[46] Carolyn Heitmeyer, 'Identity and Difference in a Muslim Community in Central Gujarat, India, Following the 2002 Communal Violence', PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2009, p. 81.

cities where Muslims have sought safety after riots. These have been described as 'ghettos', isolated and characterised by a subjective 'sense of closure' of the residents.[47] By contrast, many families in Anand have maintained possessions and ventures in their home villages after shifting residence to the town. Frequent travel also remains important to maintaining kinship ties, as relatives remain dispersed across various towns and villages in the region. The following case illustrates how a middle-class family has experienced the move to the town.

Before 2002, Sabedaben and Ilyasbhai lived in Ilyasbhai's parental village, an approximately 45-minute drive away from Anand, where Ilyasbhai owns land and a house and where he runs a practice as a lawyer. After the riots, the family moved to Anand. The main reason for their move was to enable their four teenage children to pursue English-medium higher education. Sabedaben explains how they were able to make the move at that time:

> The housing society we now live in was a Hindu society before. Most residents were Patel. We don't know exactly what happened, but we know that this housing society was attacked during the riots. To be honest, it is only because of this that we could afford to buy this big house at a relatively cheap price. The residents were in a hurry to get out.

Today, Ilyasbhai commutes to his home village four days a week to maintain his office as a notary lawyer, while working once a week in Anand to expand his urban clientele. The children of Ilyasbhai and Sabedaben remain familiar with the home villages of their parents through frequent family visits, but Anand is where they have grown up and feel at home. For their generation, the present situation of Anand is a lived reality.

The changes in the home region have not escaped the attention of Vohras living abroad. There are approximately one hundred Vohra households from Charotar that have settled in the UK and there is a similar-sized community in the USA. Some of these migrants are the descendants of migrants who followed Patels to East Africa and the UK; others came to the UK and USA by using Mumbai or Karachi as stepping stones or directly from Gujarat through marriage and, more recently, on student visas. For families now settled in the UK, the significance of transnational ties seems to have increased in recent years due to cheaper communications and travel and because migrants can spend more time abroad after their retirement. In Anand, it is not uncommon to find elderly migrants staying for months on end, mainly retired men who followed their relatives to Anand town and are making it their second home. One elderly migrant, who was born in Gujarat, grew up in East Africa and moved to the UK during his teenage years, explained how he feels about Anand in comparison to his natal village.

> I am from the village of Sundargam.[48] Now, nobody of my family lives in Sundargam. So obviously, I don't have any feelings about Sundargam. Even though it is my birthplace. Because there is nobody there now!.... They all have shifted to Anand!.... I feel at home when I go to Anand...I feel at home. (Interview with migrant, London)

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[47] Laurent Gayer and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds), *Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalisation* (Noida: HarperCollins, 2012), pp. 21–2, 324.

[48] The name of the village has been changed to maintain anonymity.

On these retirement trips, migrants are turning to a town they never thought much about when they were young. They may have visited Anand in the past, but their sense of Anand as a key site of attachment and even belonging arose only after 2002, when their relatives moved into Anand so that a previously insignificant town suddenly emerged as a key nodal point of their transnational lives.

Some Vohras living abroad have bought plots of land or houses in Anand. Among a group of Vohras settled in the UK, it was found that ten out of sixteen households had invested in land or houses in the town. Most investments were made after 2002 and most of the investors trace their origins not to Anand, but to villages in the region. Reasons for buying a house in Anand are that it is a good site for investment and that it is a convenient base from which they can be in touch with relatives in Anand and in other towns and villages in central Gujarat, as well as in Vadodara and Ahmedabad.[49]

In contrast to the Patel migrants, who enjoy their holiday home in Anand because it is at a convenient *distance* from their relatives, Vohra migrants emphasise that they like to *be close* to their relatives, who have also moved into the town. Abdullahbhai and his sister, Taslimben, went to the UK in the 1960s as teenagers, when they moved there with their family from East Africa. Now they are retired. Having kept in touch with relatives in Gujarat throughout their lives, 2002 was a turning point in their interactions with the region. Most of their relatives, who had previously lived dispersed across various villages and towns, relocated to a single neighbourhood in Anand, where their new houses were within walking distance of each other. Abdullahbhai and Taslimben responded by buying residences in Anand, too. Abdullahbhai bought a flat in an apartment building within walking distance of their relatives, while Taslimben bought a bungalow which doubles as a holiday home and a family house for one of their relocated relatives. Taslim's husband visits Anand regularly and then stays in the bungalow with his relatives, becoming part of their joint household during those periods.

Apart from investing in real estate, Vohras abroad have participated in fundraising efforts to collect financial and practical support for the refugees of 2002. Collections for charitable associations in central Gujarat were started by the Vohra association in the UK in 1993, but took off more seriously in 2002 as Vohras in the UK organised themselves to collect funds to assist the relief efforts in Anand. On an individual level, migrants visiting Anand show a willingness to contribute to the education of their younger relatives or the starting up of their businesses, and also to support local schools, hospitals and mosques. Some of the migrants' charitable activities continue to be linked to villages with the specific intention to help poor and destitute Muslims still living there, but other efforts are directed at improving the situation of Muslims in Anand town itself.

For the Vohra community in central Gujarat and abroad, Anand has become a home town. The fact that it has been a site of safety and escape from violence and marginalisation has turned Anand into an important place of settlement, return and investment, even for those who have migrated abroad. Though the names of their villages or towns of origin are remembered abroad, it is in Anand that they are building a sense of home.

Conclusion

Situated at the intersection of both rural−urban connections and international migration, Anand is an illustration of what we call a 'global town', a town that serves as a node of interconnection between international migration and return visits on the one hand, and more

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[49] These migrant Vohra families were interviewed in the UK in July−Aug. 2012 by Sanderien Verstappen.

localised forms of mobility such as commuting, rural−urban migration and internal displacement on the other. The accelerated speed of the real-estate developments that have emerged in response to local developments, such as the decision to turn Anand into a hub of education for rural youth after Independence, the instalment of Anand as the capital of the new district in 1997, and the influx of Muslims after 2002, can best be understood by taking into account the fact that transnational migrants have participated in this process of urban expansion.

The global town is experienced differently by different people, an argument which we have illustrated with reference to two communities that participate intensively in the urban conglomerate of Anand. For members of the Patel community, the rise of Anand illustrates their regional dominance and their global mobility, but without it becoming a home town or place of origin. For transnational migrants of this community, their connection with the town is a 'way of being', rather than a 'way of belonging', in the sense that they engage in the town through social relations and practices, but do not necessarily develop town-based identities associated with their actions.[50] This is in line with comparable case studies which have shown how regional elites, who traditionally control land and agricultural markets, have reproduced their power in small and medium towns that are well connected to their rural power bases by accessing urban jobs through education and by shifting residence to suburban areas in these towns while continuing to hold on to traditional resources such as land.[51]

For Charotar Sunni Vohras, the town has long been a point of arrival in the search for education and white-collar occupations, and became increasingly so during and after the riots of 2002. Anand is now a centre for the Vohra community that provides safety for a religious minority and also facilitates continued rural−urban mobility. For transnational migrants of this community, their connection with the town is becoming a 'way of being' as well as a 'way of belonging'. It is a way of being in the sense that Anand is emerging as a place where migrants come to spend parts of their holidays during visits to the home region. They come to be close to their relatives and to be able to participate in the social life of the neighbourhood while also using Anand as a convenient base from which to travel in and beyond the region during holidays. It is a way of belonging in the sense that Anand town is experienced as a safety zone and a new home in a region where Muslims are otherwise in an insecure position. For older migrants from the region, for whom Anand was not their town of origin, Anand has turned into a place of belonging as they have followed their relatives to the town. For younger migrants who have recently moved abroad after growing up in Anand town, Anand has become their home town in an even more unambiguous way.

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[50] Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, 'Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society,' in *IMR (International Migration Review)*, Vol. 38, no. 3 (Fall 2004), pp. 1002−39.

[51] Kalpana Sharma, 'Rejuvenating India's Small Towns', in *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 47, no. 3 (July 2012), pp. 63−8; K.L. Sharma, 'The Social Organisation of Urban Space', pp. 405−27; and Fox, 'Family, Caste and Commerce in a North Indian Market Town', pp. 297−314.