

Original article

## Role of small and intermediate towns in regional development: A case study of Raebareli, Sultanpur and Pratapgarh Districts of Uttar Pradesh, India

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### ABSTRACT

It is said that small and intermediate size towns play a significant role in the socio-economic transformation of regional spaces through diffusion of innovations. It, however, has been hypothesized here that in this diffusion process the villages having better infrastructural facilities and services, play central role. For its analysis, the study takes the case of a region consisting of three administrative districts - Raebareli, Sultanpur and Pratapgarh, of the Uttar Pradesh state of India. These districts have remained in political focus since India's independence and have elected two prime-ministers and some most influential politicians of their times in quest of development. However, the condition of development here is still deplorable. These districts have 22 statutory towns, and are least urbanized in the state. The towns are mainly administrative or market centres in nature serving surrounding villages by their backward and forward linkages. The study analyses 'Z scores' of select services to measure the level of development at block and village level, and portrays the spatial arrangement of towns in development setting of the region. The study observes that while towns are instrumental in promoting regional development, the role of 'rurban' centres (high service villages) in the process of diffusion of development is pivotal.

**KEY WORDS:** small and intermediate towns, regional development, agropolitan development, top-down strategy, normative futuristic planning

**ARTICLE HISTORY:** received 30 October 2017; received in revised form 5 December 2017; accepted 9 December 2017

### 1. Introduction

There are several theories of regional development such as Growth Pole Theory by PERROUX (1955), Cumulative Causation Model by MYRDAL (1957), Economic Development Theory by HIRSCHMAN (1958), Stages of Economic Growth Model by ROSTOW (1960), Core-Periphery Model by FRIEDMAN (1964), and Spatial Diffusion Theory by HAGERSTRAND (1968), which directly or indirectly explain the relationship between urbanization and development and, thereby, the processes operating in creating regional disparities (MISRA, 1980, 1988).

In the case of India, ever since the launch of the first Five Year Plan, several strategies and approaches have been followed to combat the problem of socio-economic inequality. The two-pronged strategies which were adopted to reduce the disparity and accelerate the process of

development are rural-agricultural growth oriented approach and urban-industrial growth oriented approach. The rural-agricultural growth oriented approach is known as a bottom up strategy and aims at promoting agriculture to accelerate the developmental process. The agropolitan development strategy of FRIEDMANN (1981) closely resembles this approach. Undoubtedly there was some improvement in the agricultural sector but this did not help boost the regional development process because of the lack of infrastructural facilities. Rural development remained only as a slogan. The idea behind this approach was to promote local participation but this did not take place because rural literacy was too low to realize the importance of local participation in the decision-making process.

The urban-industrial growth oriented approach is also known as a top-down strategy. This macro-

economic approach emphasized the concentration of investment in the largest urban centres in order to maximize the growth of national output (RONDINELLI, 1983). Within the framework of this strategy industrial development was promoted within and around the large urban centres like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi. The idea was that this approach by way of propulsion of developmental waves will herald a new era of socio/economic transformation in the surrounding countryside. They will open employment opportunities and local people will naturally benefit as per capita income will improve but unfortunately the development remained pocketed and developmental waves did not take place. In-fact local people were so ill trained that they could not take part in this revolutionary process of development. Thus, this strategy also failed to meet the basic objectives of reducing socio-economic development disparities. The failure was attributed to inadequately articulated and an integrated settlement system. Without an articulated and integrated settlement system impulses cannot spread from the centre outwards towards the periphery. BERRY (1969) rightly observed, *"Growth and stagnation polarize; the economic system remains unarticulated."* Commenting upon the two approaches MERA (1981) observed that either approach is insufficient. *"The conventional city size approach neglects the spatially differentiated impact of the city on its surrounding areas, and the agro-politian approach neglects the benefit of agglomeration economies within a city"* (MERA, 1981).

Currently, there is, therefore, greater emphasis on a new strategy of development which is known as the small and intermediate town development strategy (BELL & JAYNE, 2009; POWE & SHAW, 2004; TITUS, 2002). This strategy aims at overcoming the shortcomings of bottom-up and top-down approaches by forging the link between the two. The villages are so poor that they cannot forge a link with the metropolis. The metropolises are so advanced that they cannot connect with the villages. Small and intermediate towns provide the link in between the metropolis and the village because they are close to the villages and also to the big urban centres socially, culturally and economically. This is because small and intermediate towns are partially urban and partially rural (MAINET, 2015; LAZZERONI ET AL., 2014; VAZ & NIJKAMP, 2013; BELOVA & LEVCHENKOV, 2012; COURTNEY ET AL., 2007; WAITT & GIBSON, 2006). Thus, they provide a good connect between top and bottom. RONDINELLI & RUDDLE (1978) have argued that small towns and cities are crucial for stimulating the development of rural areas. *"They offer economies of scale for a*

*wide variety of basic social and economic activities, organize the economies of their hinterlands, provide access for rural people to basic services and facilities, provide access to transportation and communication networks, offer off-farm employment opportunities in tertiary or secondary sectors, and provide access to markets, services and facilities in larger towns and cities"*. Small towns and intermediate cities are the local source of agriculturally related capital goods and services upon which the modernization of a subsistence system is dependent (USAID, 1980). The justification for promoting small and intermediate towns in the regional development process has been presented in detail by HARDOY & SATTERTHWAIT (1986). A conceptual frame in this context has also been presented by MISRA (1987, 1988).

India's urban system is not only robust, it is highly dynamic as well. According to UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS 2016, there are 71 metropolises in the country, next only to China which has 76. The metropolitanisation continues unabated due to accelerated explosion and implosion processes. Nevertheless, a strong canvas of Indian urban space has also been emerging rapidly due to the large scale emergence of small and intermediate towns in the hinterland of these cities. Undoubtedly these are the products of a regional economy, but these towns also serve the big cities and villages by forging forward and backward linkages. According to the 2011 census, there are 7467 small and intermediate towns in the country which accommodate about 30 percent of India's urban population. These small and intermediate towns, thus, occupy centre stage in the regional development process by bridging the gap between 468 cities and 640,867 villages. These towns serve as markets for local products, service centres for goods, services and diffusion of innovations in addition to being shock absorbers for rural migrants.

## 2. Research objective and the study area

The purpose of this research is to examine the role that small and intermediate towns and urban centres play in regional development. The three districts which have been selected for detailed analysis are: Raebareli, Sultanpur and Pratapgarh of Uttar Pradesh (Fig. 1). The area has been especially selected because this is surrounded by Lucknow and Kanpur in the west, Allahabad in the South and Varanasi metropolises in the east, and thus, presents a very good case of the suction mechanism that takes place between rural and urban areas.

The region which is characterized by an almost level terrain, fertile soil, good climate and an

abundance of water, have long made this a densely settled area with most of the population relying on agriculture and animal husbandry. By 2011, 10.4 million people lived within the study region which is almost at the centre of the densely

populated great north Indian plains; it is among the most economically backward, least urbanized and most densely populated agricultural area in the country (MISRA, 1986).

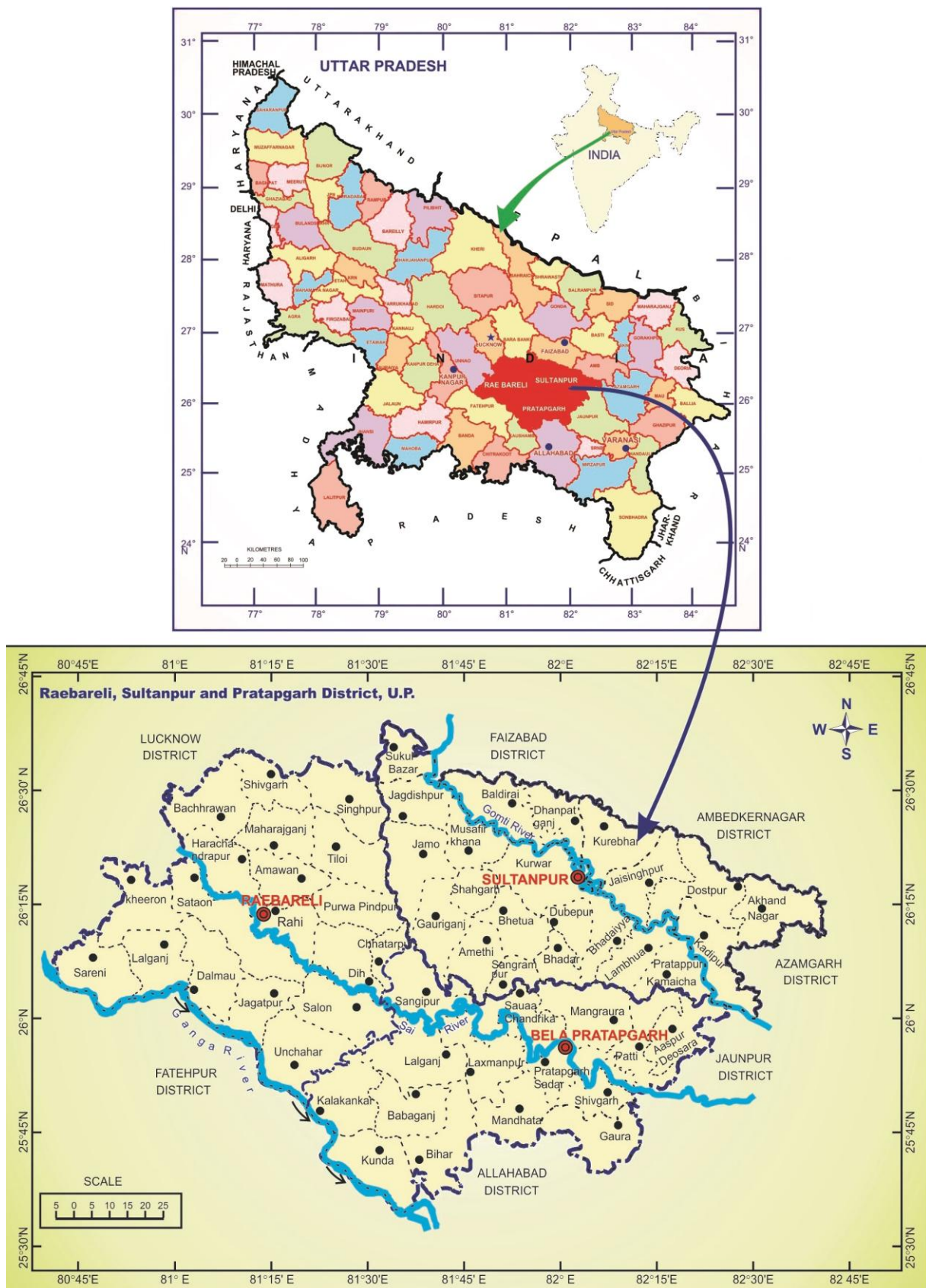


Fig. 1. Location of the study area

According to the 2011 census, 93.44 per cent of the population lived in 6,524 villages and derived a living from agriculture. Most of the settlements have a population size of 500-5000. Urban settlements compared to rural settlements are very few. There are only 22 urban settlements. The temporal

variation and size classes of these towns has been presented in Table 1.

In addition to these towns there are several settlements which serve the villages as service centres and markets to meet the requirements of the rural population.

Table 1. Growth of towns in the study area according to size class (Source: computed, based on various censuses)

Class (Population Size) of town	1981				1991				2001				2011			
	Raebareli	Sultanpur	Pratapgarh	Total	Raebareli	Sultanpur	Pratapgarh	Total	Raebareli	Sultanpur	Pratapgarh	Total	Raebareli	Sultanpur	Pratapgarh	Total
I (Above 1 Lac)	0	0	0	0	1	0		1	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	2
II (50000-100000)	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
III (20000-50000)	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	3	2	0	1	3
IV (10000-20000)	2	0	1	3	2	1	2	5	2	2	2	6	4	2	3	9
V (5000-10000)	2	2	3	7	4	4	4	12	4	3	3	10	2	3	2	7
VI (elow 5000)	2	1	2	5	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	7	4	7	18	9	6	7	22	9	6	7	22	9	6	7	22

### 3. Means and methods

The study focuses on the configuration of development around the towns at block level (block is the sub-district planning unit in India for promotion of rural development). The assumption is that there is a great disparity in the level of development and the areas having small and intermediate towns are more developed vis-a-vis those areas where the towns do not exist. The variables that have been used to measure the development in the study area are: percent main workers, percent female literacy, metalled road per thousand sq. km. area, primary health centre on per lakh (hundred thousand) population, intermediate college per lakh population, commercial bank per lakh population, cropping intensity and fertilizer consumption per hectare of gross sown area. The data for these variables for 62 Blocks of three districts were collected from secondary sources and based on the Z score method  $(X-\bar{x}/SD)$  the development score was ascertained.

### 4. Role of towns in the development of the study area

The correlation matrix among the development scores and the variables is presented in Table 2. From Table 2 it is clear that the development score is significantly correlated with metalled

road ( $r=0.55$ ), female literacy ( $r=0.54$ ), fertilizer consumption ( $r=0.45$ ), main workers ( $r=0.35$ ), primary health centres ( $r=0.34$ ) and schools ( $r=0.30$ ). Only two variables which do not show a significant relationship are banks and cropping intensity.

Based on the development score the blocks of the study region can be arranged into 4 groups. Fig. 2 shows the development pattern at block level. The composite development score of blocks reveals that only 20 percent of them performed comparatively better. There is a high degree of dynamism in these blocks due to activities associated with district and tahsil headquarters which are located in the town of these blocks.

From the previous analysis it is clear that the development variability is highly pronounced. However, it comes out only partially that the blocks with towns are more developed than those which do not have towns. But the larger size towns have better infrastructure as well as central functions and, therefore, the blocks in which they are located are better developed. To see the role of towns in promoting development, further analysis has been done on the development at village level. From Fig. 3 it can be said that the villages which are closer to a town are better developed, however, a categorical explanation of town-regional development connect is still not met.



Table 2. Correlation matrix between variables and the development score (Source: computed)

Correlation	Percent main workers	Percent female literacy	Metalled road per thousand sq. Kk. area	PHC on per lakh population	Inter college per lakh population	Commercial bank per lakh population	Cropping intensity	Fertilizer consumption in kg. Per hectare grass sown area	Development score
Percent main workers	1								
Percent female literacy	.45**	1							
Metalled road per thousand sq. km. area	-0.05	0.13	1						
PHC on per lakh population	0.22	0.21	0.11	1					
Inter college per lakh population	-.31*	0.13	0.15	-.25*	1				
Commercial bank per lakh population	-0.12	-0.12	-0.03	-0.10	0.07	1			
Cropping intensity	0.05	-0.15	-0.16	-0.18	-0.24	-0.07	1		
Fertilizer consumption in kg. per hectare grass sown area	-.25*	-0.13	.42**	-0.05	.29*	0.06	-0.07	1	
Development score	.35**	.54**	.55**	.34**	.30*	0.24	0.06	.45**	1

\*\* Significant at 99% confidence

\* Significant at 95% confidence

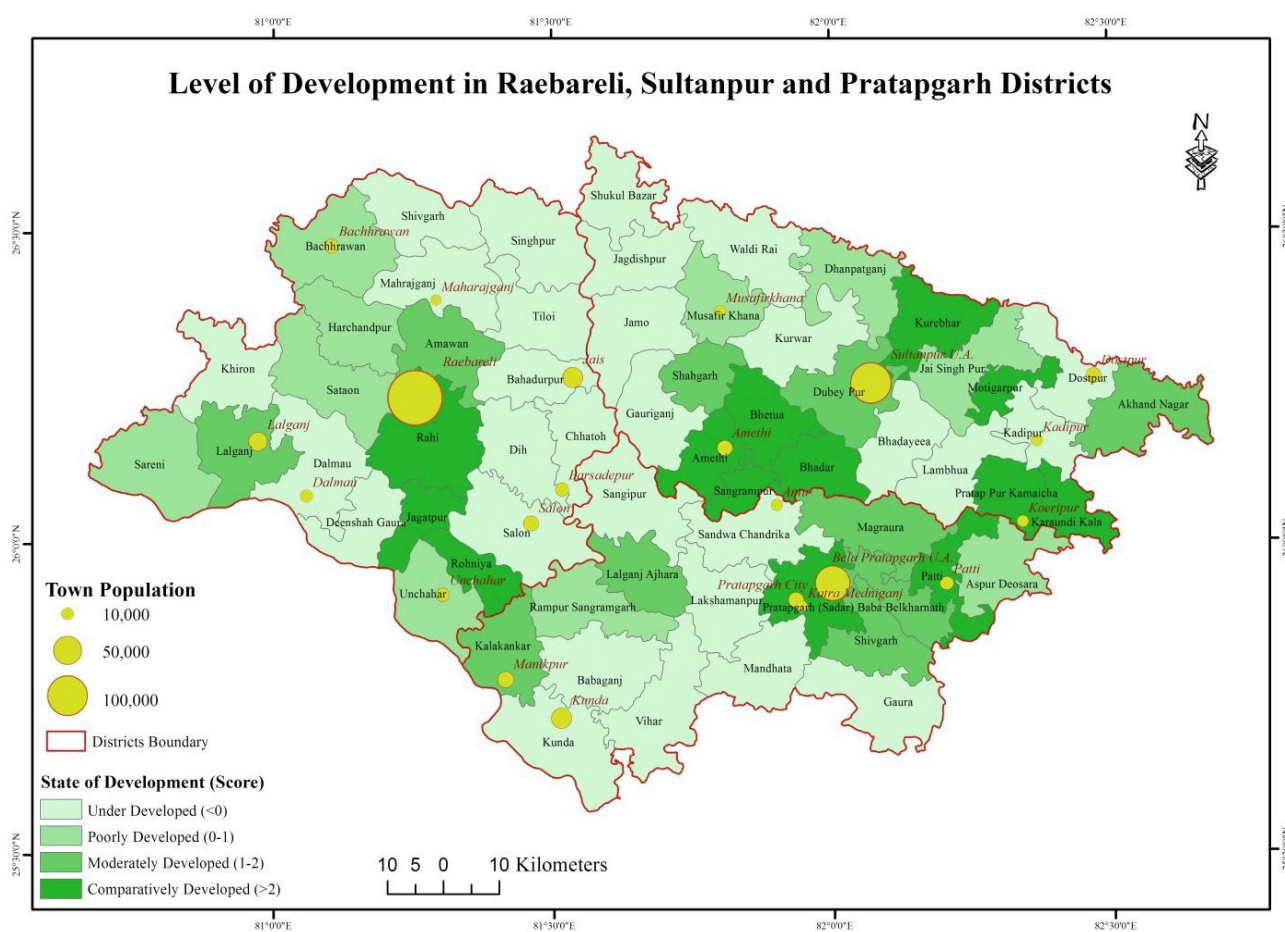


Fig. 2. State of development in the study area at the block level

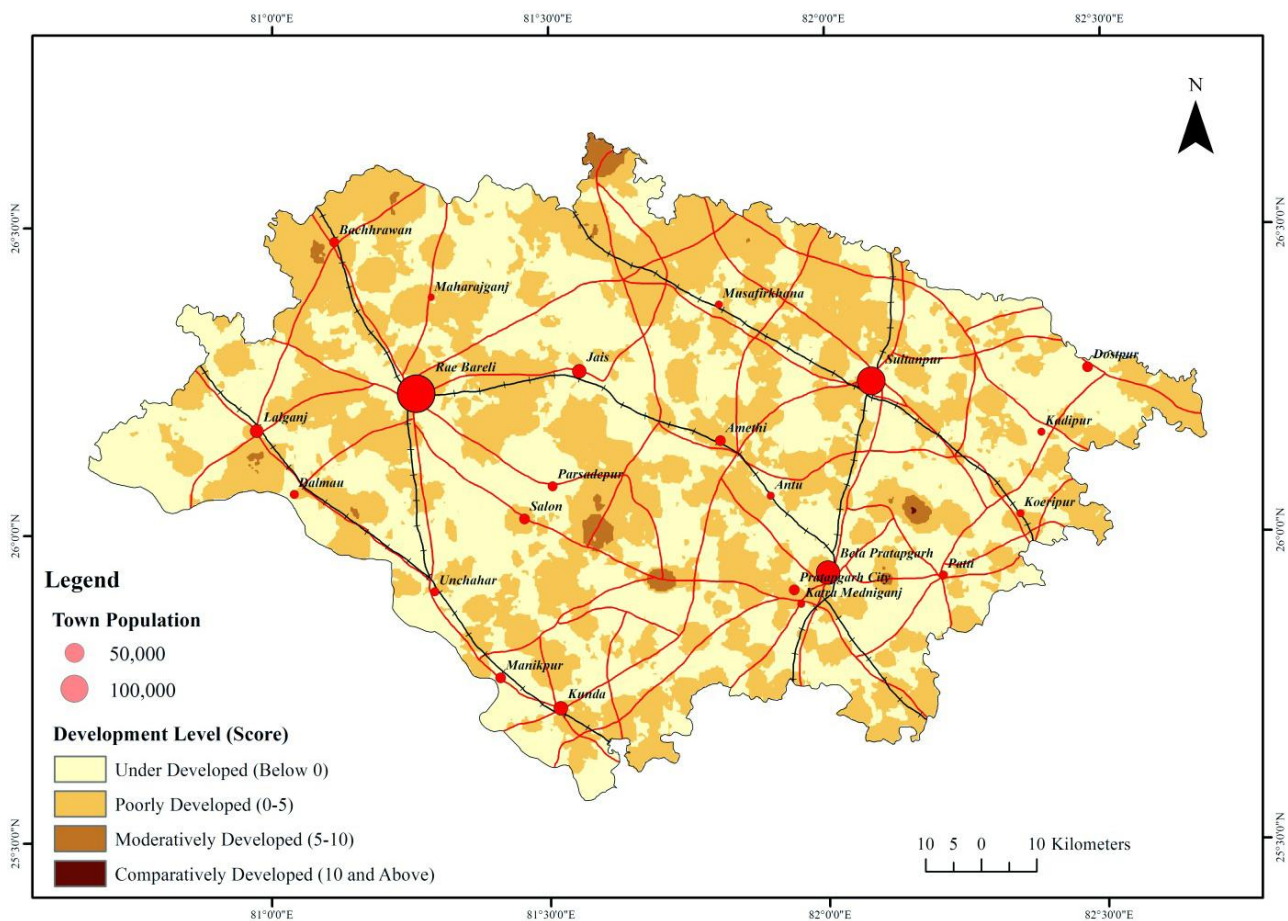


Fig. 3. State of development in the villages of the study area

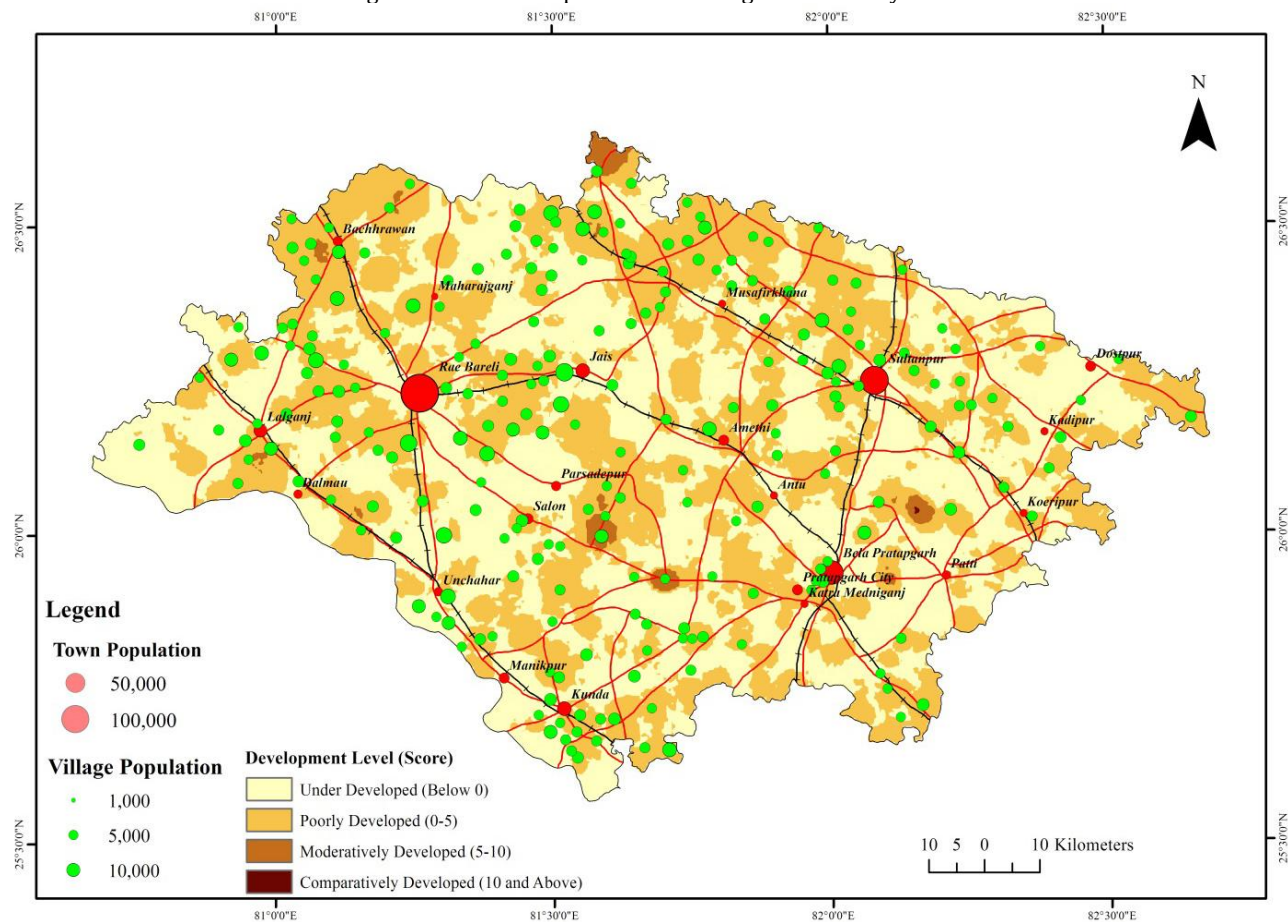


Fig. 4. Rurban villages and regional development

## 5. Evaluating the role of rural centres (high service villages) in regional development

Beside the existing 22 small and intermediate urban centres in the study area, there are several villages which have potential for development into small towns in terms of settlement size and available services. In the study area there are 6421 inhabited villages. Of these, 233 villages have a population of 5000 and are rural in character. These settlements virtually have all the potential to grow into urban centres. When we examine the pattern of development in context of these rural villages, they provide a good explanation of development and town connection (Fig. 4). The locational pattern of these rural points clearly indicates that there is a very strong bond between development and these settlements.

Although the results demonstrate the importance of large size villages in regional development, however, the services available in these settlements are not distributed according to a threshold. Strangely enough there are 8 villages (Rasta Mau, Satan Purwa, Khara, Azadpur, Bewali, Katghara Patti, Raigarh and Baraee) where there is an adequate population, yet there are no services. These settlements do not have a negotiating capacity due to the lack of leadership. It is necessary that the services be located on the basis of the availability of the threshold of a particular function rather than on any other extraneous considerations.

## 6. Conclusions

The analysis reveals that by promoting the infrastructure facilities in potential villages, the pace of development can definitely be accelerated. It is imperative that while fixing the developmental priorities, these settlements are noted. Given the necessary infrastructure, these villages can help boost the development of a region. The planners and the policy makers have simply to ignite the fire of development by promoting the diversification of agriculture, arranging rail-road connectivity, encouraging entrepreneurial skills and extending selected services. This normative futuristic planning, if implemented, can lead to a balanced, sustainable and environmentally friendly development. The dream project of smart cities can be sustained only when these settlements are facilitated with better quality of life and living standards as there cannot be smart cities without smart villages.

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