City Profile: Guwahati

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Abstract

This paper profiles Guwahati, the capital city of the state of Assam in North-East India, to develop a background understanding of the city for the research project "Poverty, Inequality and Violence in Indian Cities: Towards Inclusive Planning and Policies." The paper comprises of two parts. Part I lays out the relevant urban context by discussing Guwahati's demography, its economy and employment, the history of migration and conflicts in Assam and Guwahati, the processes of urban growth and development in the city and urban governance. Part II identifies and discusses some of the key arenas of conflicts and violence that are linked to land, planning and governance regimes in the city, namely, informal settlement of the city's hills, street vending and women's safety and public transport. These arenas of conflict and violence will be the focus areas for the research project.

Acknowledgments

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INTRODUCTION

Inspite of low rate of urbanisation in India[1] in the last two decades, cities have not been able to provide the growing urban population with viable housing, potable water, adequate sanitation, employment that gives them reasonable wages, etc. As a result, a large proportion of the urban population is constrained to live in slums or informal settlements and depend on the informal sector for their livelihood. Parallel to this, over the past decade or two, governments and elites have been pushing for urban development that would transform Indian cities according to their images of a world-class or global city (see, for e.g. Dupont 2011; Desai 2011; Mahadevia 2011; Roy 2011). This has resulted in urban exclusions through land-use planning, inequitable land allocations, increasing commercialisation of land, implementation of infrastructure and beautification projects, privatisation of urban services, criminalisation of the informalities of the poor, and urban governance processes in which only the influential and organised sections have a voice (see, for e.g. Benjamin 2008; Mahadevia & Narayanan 2008; Anjaria 2009; Bhan 2009; Desai 2012a; Graham et al 2012).

These forces of neo-liberal globalization are leading to evictions of poor and marginalised groups from their informal habitats and livelihoods, withdrawal of state actors from the delivery of urban services with this space being filled up by non-state actors (some call this as the emergence of a proto state) creating "ungoverned territories" and increasing segmentation on account of speculative land markets overlaid on the base of caste- and religious-based segmentation. As a result, the poor and marginalised face more violence than before from state and non-state actors in the places where they live and work. They respond through coping strategies, non-violent mobilizations in some instances, and counter-violence in other instances. Many Indian cities have also become more segmented along caste, religious and ethnic lines (see, for e.g. Gayer & Jaffrelot 2012), which is likely to further develop chains and webs of violence. While gender has never been mainstreamed into urban planning in India, the above-mentioned processes are often creating even more unsafe urban spaces for women and girls (see, for e.g. Menon-Sen 2008; Choudhury 2012; Polanki 2012; Viswanath 2013). Indian cities are thus seeing increasing deprivations and inequalities, conflicts and violence.

The links between poverty, inequalities, types of violence and urban planning are not, however, well understood in Indian cities. This research will investigate potential pathways through which urban planning and governance mechanisms become drivers of deprivations and different types of conflicts and violence, as well as the experience of and response to these by different social groups. The research aims to develop an understanding of if, and how, urban planning and governance interventions can help reduce urban tensions, inequalities, conflicts and violence in Indian cities.

Guwahati, the capital city of the state of Assam in North-East India, is one of the cities selected for this research. The City Profile of Guwahati has been prepared to develop a background understanding of the city in relation to the research questions posed by this research project. The profile, along with other conceptual and methodological papers, will serve as a foundation for the research undertaken in Guwahati over 2014-15. We begin by briefly outlining urban violence in Guwahati and our approach to it, and how that informs this City Profile paper.

Urban violence is often understood and measured in terms of crime in a city. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), in 2011, the rate of violent crime in Assam was the third highest in the country (Sarma 2012) and the rate of crime against women in Assam was

the second highest in the country (The Times of India 2012a).[2] Since Guwahati has less than 10 lakh population, NCRB data is not available for the city itself. However, crime data presented by the State Home Department in the 2012 State Assembly revealed that Kamrup (metro) district, in which Guwahati city is located, had topped all districts of the state in terms of "break in" cases such as thefts, dacoity, and murders during thefts (The Times of India 2012b). The Guwahati city police website also gives the annual figures for many crimes registered under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) (such as murder, arson, robbery, theft, burglary, extortion, rape, rioting, etc) over the 2009-2013 period.[3] However, this 5-year period is very short to make clear conclusions about whether the incidence of a particular IPC crime is increasing or decreasing in the city. Moreover, since this is reported crime, it would be difficult to tell whether the incidence of that crime is actually increasing or it is simply the reporting of that crime which is increasing. This crime data also does not tell us about the spatiality of these crimes in the city. Lastly, it does not tell us about what have caused the reported crimes, that is, nothing is known about the epidemiology of the crime to make any linkage with policy interventions, leave aside interventions on urban planning and governance policies.

Furthermore, there are inherent limitations of defining (and measuring) urban violence in terms of crime since not every act or process that is violent is considered crime. This is the case especially when understanding urban violence in relation to urban planning and governance. Therefore, in order to obtain a broader picture of urban violence in Guwahati, we created a database of news articles reporting on the city and analysed them.[4] Some of the IPC crimes are, of course, reported in news articles, however, an analysis of the articles reveals that there are many incidents and types of urban violence linked to urban planning and governance. In most cases, these are not considered crime and hence not registered in the crime statistics. A robust example of this is state-led evictions of the urban poor, especially from Reserve Forest lands, Railway lands and the city's wetlands. News articles also report on land mafias forcefully grabbing lands from the poor on the city's hills and wetlands. They also report on land scams in certain areas of the city, which have been made possible by state authorities. They also refer to harassment of street vendors by the police or local goons, as well as evictions of the homeless from the streets. There are also many articles about inadequate municipal water supply and drainage in the city, leading to the purchase of water at exorbitant prices from private water tankers or consumption of contaminated groundwater. All of the above are forms of conflict and structural violence linked to urban planning and governance in some manner, with some of them also including direct violence by the state and state actors or by powerful non-state actors.

Following the molestation of a young woman by a group of 15-20 men in full public view outside a bar in Guwahati and widespread media coverage of the incident, North East Network (NEN), a non-governmental organisation in Guwahati, conducted a survey with approximately 1,000 women to evaluate their experiences of safety in the city's public spaces. 70 per cent of the surveyed women reported that they had experienced sexual harassment / violence in public spaces (NEN 2013). The survey also revealed that certain factors linked to urban planning create conducive conditions for sexual harassment / violence to occur. Along with addressing societal factors such as lack of respect for women, these urban planning related factors will also have to be addressed in order to make cities safer for women.

There is clearly a need to examine urban violence from an urban planning and governance perspective. This research project examines the forms of urban violence that emerge directly or indirectly from urban planning and governance. In Part I of this City Profile we lay out the

relevant urban context by discussing Guwahati's demography, its economy and employment, the history of migration and conflicts in Assam and Guwahati, the processes of urban growth and development in the city and urban governance. This discussion is based on secondary sources, primary research with key informants and field visits in the city as well as an analysis of legislations and policies. It also tries to build upon our previous studies in its understanding of land development in Guwahati and local governance structures in the city (see Desai 2012b, Desai et al 2012). Part II of the City Profile identifies and discusses some of the key arenas of conflicts and violence that are linked to land, planning and governance regimes in the city. This is based on primary research with key informants in the city as well as field visits. These arenas of conflict and violence have been selected as focus areas of research under this project.

PART I: CONTEXT

1. Demography

Guwahati is the capital city of Assam, which is among the states with low level of urbanisation. 14.1 per cent of the state's population was living in urban areas in 2011, which is an increase from 12.9 per cent in 2001 and 11.1 per cent in 1991. The urbanisation rate (rate of urban population growth) for Assam for the decade of 1991-2001 was 3.3 per cent p.a, which was higher than that of India (of 2.8 per cent p.a.). But, in the last decade, that is, 2001-11, the urbanisation rate slowed down to 2.5 per cent p.a., which is lower than that of India (of 2.8 per cent p.a.). While there is marginal increase in the urbanisation rate for India post-2001, coinciding with high economic growth rate in India that for Assam has slowed down indicating low level of economic growth in the state.

Guwahati, meaning "areca nut marketplace" in Assamese, was known by the name of "Gauhati" during the British period. It is situated along the Brahmaputra River and is bound on the southern side by the foothills of the Shillong plateau. It is the capital city of Assam and gateway to North-East India. It is also the business hub and largest city of Assam and the North-East.

According to the 2011 census, Guwahati municipal area and Guwahati Metropolitan Area (GMA) had a population of 963,429 and 968,549, respectively (Table 1). The municipal area is under the jurisdiction of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) whose limits were last extended in 1991 to cover an area of 216.79 sq.km. The GMA covers about 262 sq.km. and is under the jurisdiction of the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA). The knowledgeable city residents however contest the population figures, arguing that both 2001 and 2011 census has undercounted residents of hill settlements. By 2015, the city's population would be about 14 lakhs.

Table 1: Guwahati Population Growth

Year	GMCA*		GMA excluding GMCA		GMA*	
	Population	CAGR (%)	Population	CAGR (%)	Population	CAGR
1951	43,615	-	53,774	-	97,389	-
1961	1,00,707	8.7	98,775	6.3	1,99,482	7.4
1971	1,23,783	2.1	1,68,436	5.5	2,93,219	3.9
1981**	2,68,945	8.1	1,02,351	-4.9	4,35,280	4.0
1991	5,84,342	8.1	61,827	-4.9	6,46,169	4.0
2001	8,09,895	3.3	80,878	2.7	8,90,773	3.3
2011	9,63,429	1.8	85,998	0.6	9,68,549	0.8

*   GMCA-Guwahati Municipal Corporation Area; GMA-Guwahati Metropolitan Area (also known as the Guwahati Urban Agglomeration)
**   The Census 1981 was not conducted in Assam. The population figures have been extrapolated on the basis of the 1971-1991 Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR).
Source: (i) GMDA (2009: 12), and (ii) Census 2011 from files downloaded from http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/population_enumeration.aspx.

Guwahati witnessed a very high rate of growth in the period from 1971 to 1991; 8.1 per cent p.a., which is likely on account of the city becoming Assam's capital in 1972, migration from rural Assam and other states of the North-East region of India, and also the cross-border migration from Bangladesh after the latter's formation in 1972. Since then, GMC area has registered slowing down of population growth rate, from 3.3 per cent p.a. in 1991-2001 period and 1.8 per cent p.a. in 2001-11 period (Table 1). In fact, in the last decade the GMC

area has experienced a growth rate that is even lower than that of Assam's urban population growth rate of 2.5 per cent p.a. The GMA areas have registered a population growth that is even lower than that of GMC rate in 2001-11. This means that the migration rate to the city has slowed down in the decade of 2001-11 due to either decline in migrants from other North-East states and rural Assam or decline from cross-border migration or both. Thus, contrary to the expectation, the population of Guwahati city and its metropolitan region has stabilised since 2001 due to economic and geo-political reasons. The reason could be, this is a conjecture that the population from other NE states, who were earlier migrating to Guwahati alone, have begun to migrate to other parts of India, resulting decline in in-migration to Guwahati city.

We present here urban Assam data in absence of availability of such data for Guwahati. GMA area comprises about 22 per cent of the state's urban population and hence state's behaviour cannot be taken as that of Guwahati city. The average household size in urban Assam in 2011-12 was 3.9, whereas that of urban India is 4.0 (NSSO 2014: 46). In 2004-05, the average household size in urban Assam was the same as in 2011-12 (3.9), but then in urban India it was much higher at 4.3 (NSSO 2006: 40). In both the years, the average household size in rural Assam was 4.7 and 5.0 for the respective years. The average household size in urban Assam has been far lower than in the other North-East states of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland for both the years. Low household size in urban Assam indicates large-scale single male migration to the city for employment.

2. Urban Economy, Poverty and Employment

Guwahati is the major hub of economic activity in the entire North-East region. The establishment of Guwahati refinery in 1962 marked the beginning of industrialisation in the city. The construction of the bridge over Brahmaputra at Saraighat and the shifting of the capital from Shillong to Guwahati in 1972 (as Shillong was made capital of the newly formed Meghalaya state carved out of Assam) made it into one of the most important cities in the North-East.

Before analysing the economy of Guwahati, we look at that of urban Assam in comparison to urban India to assess how different is the state from overall India. Analysis presented is only of last decade. On the whole, urban Assam has lower Work Participation Rate (WPR) than that of urban India. In 2011-12, urban Assam's WPR was just 32.9 per cent, which was lower than that of India's 35.5 per cent (Table 2). This was on account of very low female WPR, at 9.0 per cent in urban Assam as compared to 14.7 per cent in urban India. Male WPR is nearly the same in both urban Assam and urban India. Women are thus not finding work in urban Assam. This was the case even in 2004-05, when urban Assam's female WPR was 10.9 per cent while that in urban India was 16.6 per cent. Even urban Assam has experienced decline in the female WPR in the last decade like in urban India.

Table 2: Employment Indicators, Assam State and India

Particulars	Urban Assam		Urban India	
	2004-05*	2011-12**	2004-05*	2011-12**
Work Participation Rate – Male (%)	55.1	54.2	54.9	54.6
Work Participation Rate – Female (%)	10.9	9.0	16.6	14.7
Work Participation Rate – Person (%)	33.6	32.9	36.5	35.5
Self-employment – Male (%)	45.3	55.0	44.8	41.7
Regular employment – Male (%)	43.3	35.2	40.6	43.4
Casual Labour – Male (%)	11.4	9.8	14.6	14.9

Particulars	Urban Assam		Urban India	
	2004-05*	2011-12**	2004-05*	2011-12**
Self-employment – Female (%)	26.4	46.7	47.7	42.8
Regular employment – Female (%)	54.5	44.4	35.6	42.8
Casual Labour – Female (%)	19.1	7.8	16.7	14.3
Primary sector employment – Male (%)	4.3	4.0	6.1	5.6
Secondary sector employment – Male (%)	21.4	23.2	34.4	35.3
Tertiary sector employment – Male (%)	74.3	72.9	59.5	59.1
Primary sector employment – Female (%)	7.3	7.4	18.1	10.9
Secondary sector employment – Female (%)	8.7	12.6	32.4	34.0
Tertiary sector employment – Female (%)	84.0	80.0	49.5	55.1

Note: All the employment statistics are for the Usual Status (Principal + Secondary) (UPSS) workers.
Source: * NSSO (2006)
       ** NSSO (2014)

Urban Assam's economy is dominated by tertiary sector. In 2011-12, 72.9 per cent male and 80 per cent female workers were employed in this sector as compared to 59.1 per cent and 55.1 per cent, respectively, in urban India (Table 2). Urban Assam offers low employment in agriculture, indicated by just 4.0 per cent male and 7.4 per cent female workers employed in this sector in 2011-12 when these figures for urban India are 5.6 per cent and 10.9 per cent, respectively. Assam has not attracted industries and hence has very low employment in the secondary sector; 23.2 per cent male and 12.6 per cent female workers were employed in this sector in 2011-12. In urban India, 35.3 per cent male and 34.0 per cent female workers were employed in the secondary sector in the same year.

Secondary sector consists of manufacturing and construction. 9.0 per cent among male workers and 0.9 per cent among female workers in urban Assam were employed in construction while in urban India these figures were 10.7 per cent and 4.0 per cent respectively in 2011-12. This means that urban Assam is not lagging behind India too much in construction sector employment. This means that manufacturing sector has not developed in urban Assam, keeping employment in this sector, and hence in the overall secondary sector, low in urban Assam. Like in India, there was improvement from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in secondary sector employment in urban Assam, by about two percentage points in case of male workers and four percentage points in case of female. Due to absence of manufacturing sector employment and non-possibility of continuing in agriculture sector, an overwhelming proportion of workers, both male and female, in urban Assam are concentrated in tertiary sector. There was only about 1.5 percentage point decline in male workers' employment in tertiary sector and four percentage point decline in female workers' employment in tertiary sector.

The tertiary sector employment is in both self-employment as well as regular employment type of work. 55.0 per cent male workers were self-employed and 35.2 per cent of them were regular employed in urban Assam in 2011-12. In urban India, 41.7 per cent and 43.4 per cent male workers were in self and regular employment, respectively (Table 2). Since agriculture employment is not large among urban males, it is evident that the self-employment is in tertiary sector in urban Assam. Since manufacturing employment is not large among urban males, regular employment is also mainly in tertiary sector in urban Assam.

Regular employment among the female workers was 44.4 per cent in urban Assam in 2011-12, which is higher proportion than among males (35.2%) (Table 2). All this employment is likely to be in the tertiary sector where 80 per cent of the women workers are in urban Assam. Proportion of self-employed female workers is 46.7 per cent, which is lower than the

proportion among the male workers (55.0%). It is likely that many women are in the low-end services such as domestic work, etc. which fetches regular work.

There is much lower casual work availability in urban Assam, among male and female workers both, as compared to urban India. This must be on account of low manufacturing sector work. There is a very high decline in casual workers among the females in urban Assam from 2004-05 to 2011-12 (from 19.1 per cent to 7.8 per cent). Among the male workers also casual work has declined in urban Assam, while that in urban India the same has increased among male workers during the same period. A dramatic change is near doubling of self-employment among female workers and a 10 percentage point increase in the share of self-employment among male workers in urban Assam, most of which will be in the tertiary sector indicating a situation of under-employment. That explains why rental housing is an important economic activity in cities such as Guwahati and for which access to land is essential, explaining desire to own land in cities such as Guwahati (as we would discuss later in the paper). In contrast, in urban India, self-employment has declined among male as well as female workers in 2004-05 to 2011-12 period.

Table 3: Employment Indicators, Guwahati, 2004-05

Particulars	Male	Female
Self-employment (%)	36.8	2.0
Regular employment (%)	50.4	91.5
Casual Labour (%)	12.8	6.5
Primary sector employment (%)	12.5	16.3
Secondary sector employment (%)	24.1	0.9
Tertiary sector employment (%)	63.4	82.8

Note: Guwahati employment data are for Kamrup district, which is largely comprised of Guwahati city. Data below district is not available in the NSS surveys unless there is a metro city.
Source: Srivastava et al 2010, Table 3.3, p.36 and 37 (based on unit level data of the NSSO).

The tertiary sector is the main sector of employment even in Guwahati's economy. According to NSSO's 2004-05 round data, a large proportion of workforce, both male and female, is engaged in the tertiary sector (Table 3). 63.4 per cent male and 82.8 per cent female workers were engaged in tertiary sector in 2004-05. While 24.1 per cent male workers were employed in secondary sector, just 0.9 per cent of the female workers were in this sector. Local experts[5] state that only women from Bangladesh and Jharkhand work in construction sector. Construction labour, including women, work in gangs and are transported from one site to another by the labour contractor and have poor working conditions, as elsewhere in the country. They also state that the construction workers do not live in the city. They live outside the city, some of them in the nearby villages, and are transported to the city. They are not allowed to settle in the city. The Assamese and indigenous women are engaged in street vending. There is therefore ethnicity to the work done by women.

Employment in the primary sector is larger in Guwahati as compared to urban Assam in 2004-05, which is somewhat surprising. The NSSO data also shows that Guwahati has a large share of regular salaried employment with 91.5 per cent females and 50.4 per cent males falling under this category in 2004-05 (Table 3). Regular wage employment would include informal tertiary-sector workers like domestic maids. Unlike urban India and even urban Assam, just 2.0 per cent female workers in Guwahati were self-employed when this proportion among male workers was 36.8 per cent. It seems that the survey has not captured self-employed women working out of home adequately. Again, the local experts tell us that women undertake home-based work such as liquor brewing, weaving, etc. Regular employment among male workers is much higher in Guwahati than in urban Assam, but,

again, a significant proportion of that will be in tertiary sector, given that secondary sector employment among them is just 24 per cent.

The service sector provides employment in both the formal sector and the informal sector. Most of the workforce in the formal service sector is likely to be engaged in administration and other institutional areas of employment since Guwahati is the capital of Assam and also a hub of educational institutions. The workforce in the informal service sector, comprising of the urban poor and lower-income groups, are likely to be petty shopkeepers and vegetable sellers, small shop assistants, mechanics, cleaners, domestic help, cooks and waiters in food joints, construction workers, cycle rickshaw drivers, and manual labourers working in the wholesale and retail markets. A sample survey of 1036 persons across different poverty pockets found that 78.4 per cent are either self-employed or work in the private sector (SSTEP n.d.).

Table 4: Employment Indicators by Gender

Economic Indicator	Male	Female	Total
Work participation rate (%)	60.0	15.9	41.3
Status of employment (%)			
Self employed	50.1	34.4	47.5
Regular employed	26.6	51.0	30.6
Casual labour	23.3	14.6	21.9
Unemployed	8.0	25.0	11.3
Employment sector (%)			
Manufacturing	2.8	4.2	3.1
Construction	20.5	14.6	19.5
Wholesale trade	1.4	0.0	1.2
Petty trade	23.9	10.4	21.7
Waste collection	11.2	13.5	11.5
Transport	18.3	3.1	15.8
Hotel & restaurant	1.4	7.3	2.4
ICT + Finance + Real estate	2.6	5.2	3.1
Public admin + social service	5.7	11.5	6.6
Personnel services	6.3	25.0	9.3
Others (unspecified)	5.7	5.2	5.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Desai et al (2012)

In an earlier study conducted by us in eight informal settlements in Guwahati, which housed all type of households, with varying income groups and comprising of owners, tenant-households and single male migrants sharing a dwelling unit, 50 per cent employed males and 34 per cent of employed females were self-employed (Table 4). The regular employed females were 51 per cent of the total workers and regular employed males were 27 per cent of the total workers. While the figures do not tally with that of the city level, the pattern matches to an extent; majority of women employed as regular workers although majority of men employed as self-employed and very low proportion as casual labour and among them males having a larger share than the female. The study also found that about half of those living as shared-tenants worked as casual labour (Desai et al 2012). Predominant employment among the female workers was personnel services (as domestic workers) (25 per cent), followed by construction (15 per cent), waste collection (14 per cent) and public services and administration (12 per cent). For working males, the predominant employment was petty trade (24 per cent), followed by construction (21 per cent), then transport (18 per cent) and waste collection (11.2 per cent). One settlement among our study was of waste workers of the

GMC and hence we find such high proportion of waste collectors in our sample. There was very little manufacturing sector employment in our sample households. At the city level, 24 per cent males were in secondary sector, which includes manufacturing and construction, nearly matches with this primary survey, wherein 23.3 per cent males were found engaged in secondary sector. It was argued earlier that the secondary sector could be to a large extent construction, which is proved by the primary survey data presented in Table 4.

Urban Assam's poverty line in 2011-12 was Rs. 1,008 per capita per month, which comes to Rs. 33 per capita per day (Planning Commission 2013: 5). Using Tendulkar Committee methodology (Planning Commission 2009), urban poverty has been estimated to be 20.49 per cent in 2011-12 (Planning Commission 2013: 6), which means 9.21 lakh people were below the poverty line of Rs. 1,008 per capita per month. Incidence of urban poverty is higher in Assam than India (13.70 per cent) in 2011-12. This is also reflected in low monthly per capita expenditures in urban Assam (Rs. 2,090.18), which is 84 per cent as that of urban India (Rs. 2,477.02). However, urban poverty incidence (of 20.49 per cent) is far lower than the rural poverty incidence (33.89 per cent) in Assam (Planning Commission 2013: 6). Both, rural and urban poverty incidence in Assam were higher than that in India in 2011-12; rural and urban poverty incidence in India being 25.70 per cent and 13.70 per cent, respectively (Planning Commission 2013: 6).

In 2004-05, as per the Tendulkar Committee methodology, poverty incidence in urban Assam was 21.8 per cent as compared to 36.4 per cent in rural Assam (Planning Commission 2009: 17). Thus, 8.46 lakh people were below the poverty line in urban Assam. In India, urban and rural poverty incidence was 25.7 per cent and 41.8 per cent respectively (Planning Commission 2009:17), indicating that poverty incidence in Assam, both rural and urban was far lower than in India. But, since then, while poverty has declined rapidly in India while Assam has lagged behind.

There is a decline of 1.3 percentage points (from 21.8 per cent to 20.5 per cent) in urban poverty in Assam whereas that in urban India has been 12 percentage points (from 25.7 per cent to 13.7 per cent). But, on the whole, there is increase in number of urban poor, from 8.46 lakhs in 2004-05 to 9.21 lakh in 2011-12, which is an increase at the rate of 1.2 per cent p.a. in this seven year period. The poverty trends in urban Assam match with the employment trends wherein we do not see any improvement, and on the contrary see increase in self-employment.

By a different methodology adopted by the Planning Commission (Press Information Bureau 2007), poverty estimate for the Kamrup district was the very low level of 2.94 per cent. This is probably due to the concentration of slums only in the city area while the urban agglomeration and the district itself is quite prosperous (Srivastava et.al. 2010).[6] The City Development Plan 2006 estimated that the municipal area had 31 per cent population below poverty line in 2001 (GMC 2006), an estimate which is likely to be based on the Below Poverty Line (BPL) survey conducted in the city and hence is very different than the poverty estimate obtained from the NSS's consumption expenditure survey.

## 3. History, Migration and Conflicts

According to the population census of 2011, 65 per cent of the state's population is Hindus, 31 per cent is Muslims and just 4 per cent are others. In 1901, these figures were 71 per cent, 12 per cent and 17 per cent respectively. By 1951, just after the national independence, the proportion of Hindus was 72 per cent and that of Muslims was 25 per cent. The proportion of

others had declined to 3 per cent. The tribal communities seem to have been classified as Hindus. The increase in Muslim proportion prior to independence is on account of internal migration in the unified province of Bengal that consisted of current West Bengal and Assam of India and former East Bengal (now Bangladesh). Muslims were brought to the tea plantations from East and West Bengal. They also migrated to work as labour. Then, the influx of Bangladeshi Muslims increased due to 1971 war. The Assam accord between AASU and central government, settled for March 24, 1971 as cut-off date for identification and deportation of immigrants[7].

Although, majority of Muslims are Bengalis, there are many Assamese-speaking Muslims living in upper Assam. The Muslims are in substantial numbers in the districts of Goalpara, Dhubri, Naogaon and Cachar. For example, according to 2001 census, present day Dhubri has 74.29 per cent Muslim population and Barpeta has 59.36 per cent[8]. The tribal population constitutes about 13 per cent of the total population of the State (Srikanth, 2000). The tribal communities are differentiated as those living in the hills and plains. The hill tribes, Karbis and Dimas, are concentrated in hilly districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hills. They have their own dialects and do not identify themselves with the other Assamese. However, it is very difficult to say who actually constitutes the indigenous population as most of the groups living here came to this region from different places at different points of time. It is believed that the Austroloids migrated first to this region and settled in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts of the present Meghalaya state. They were followed by the Mongoloids, who are referred as the *kiratas*, in the Vedic literature. They migrated from the western part of China. Tribes like Bodo, Garo, Rabha, Deuries, Misings, Morans, Chutias, Dimasas, Koches (Rajbongshi), Lalung, and Hajong belong to this race. The Bodo tribe later branched off as a different sub-group and founded their independent kingdom. Other tribes such as Nagas, the Kukis, the Karbis, the Mizos, etc, came much later. In the second decade of the 20th century, the Ahom, belonging to the Tais of Mongoloid race came to the upper Assam through Burma, facing strong resistance from the local kings and tribal chiefs while trying to establish their rule in upper Assam (Srikanth 2000; Acharya 2003; Daimary 2012).

Guwahati, like any other city, has grown though in-migration during different periods of its history. The 1971 census showed that 59 per cent of Guwahati's population had migrated to the city. The highest migration was from within the Kamrup district (17 per cent), which was the district in which Guwahati was located at the time, thereby indicating high rural-urban migration from nearby areas. The next highest migrant source was from outside Assam (16.9 per cent). Of these inter-state migrants, a large proportion were from Bihar (41.9 per cent), followed by West Bengal (12.6 per cent), Rajasthan (10.4 per cent), Meghalaya (10.2 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (9.6 per cent). This was followed by intra-state migration from other districts of Assam (15 per cent). Finally, a high proportion of Guwahati's migrants were from outside India (10.6 per cent) due to the international borders surrounding Assam (see Map 1). Of these international migrants, maximum were from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) (70 per cent) followed by Nepal (15.5 per cent) (Borgohain 2011). Guwahati's population growth (Table 1) was marked by further high in-migration in the 1970s and 1980s. From 1991 onwards, the population growth rate has decreased, reflecting the decreasing migration rates into the city. However, since it is the primate city in the region, it has seen significant migration nonetheless.

Map 1: North-East Region of India
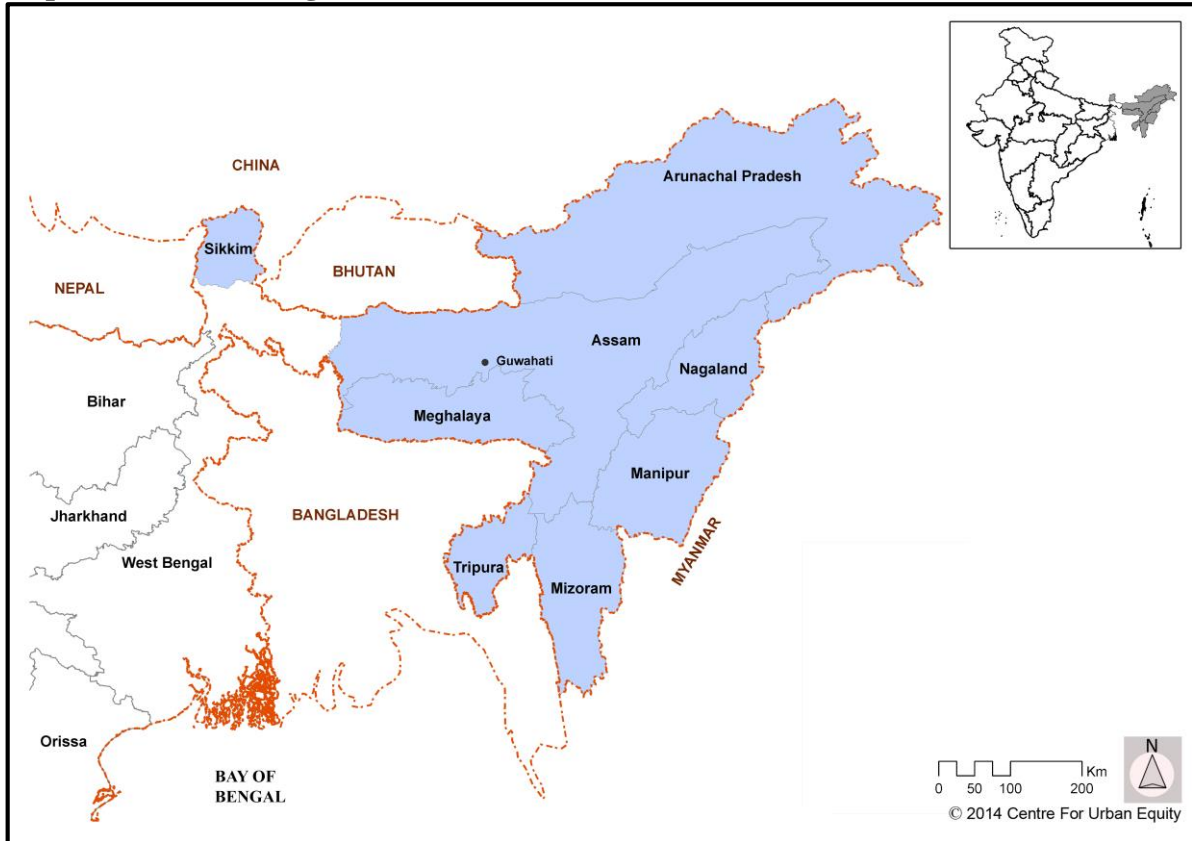
Source: Map prepared by CUE

The presence of high numbers of migrants in Guwahati in 1971 can be linked to the history of migration, starting in the colonial period, into Assam as a whole. All of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century saw the discovery of tea, coal, oil and natural gas in Assam. Demand for tea labour in the plantations was unfulfilled by the Assamese peasantry who were more involved with agricultural activities in their own fields. In 1978 Myron Weiner wrote that Assam had been the fastest growing area in the sub-continent for nearly 70 years (Baruah 1999). The process of immigration started when the British introduced the wasteland settlement policy with a view to collect more revenue. While this policy enabled tea planters to usurp more land and procure labour from outside the province, it also encouraged Muslim peasants from Bengal to migrate and settle in the wastelands. Workers were brought from Odisha, Bengal, Bihar, United Province (Uttar Pradesh), Central Province (Madhya Pradesh) and parts of Madras Province to work on the tea estates. This "tea labour community" has been the oldest of Assam's migrant groups. The British also recruited Nepalese in the armed forces and their presence encouraged more migration from the kingdom to Assam where they took over vast virgin lands for sugarcane cultivation and dairy farming in the districts of Kamrup, Lakhimpur and Darrang. Many Marwaris also came in search of economic opportunities along with British and engaged in trade and business activities. In order to increase the state revenue, the British with the help of Assamese landlords, encouraged the Bengali Muslim peasants from East Bengal to migrate to the Brahmaputra valley. Compelled by poverty and overpopulation, lakhs of landless peasants mainly from Mymensingh district of East Bengal settled in Brahmaputra valley. Since the Assamese were reluctant to learn English, the British brought along with them many English knowing Bengalis to work as clerk, lawyers and other professionals (Guha 1977). Lastly, migration was also promoted by

the labour demands in industries, the coal and oil fields, construction of railway lines and other development activities.

Bengali Muslims and Bengali Hindus from the region known as East Bengal were two of the other important migrant communities who began to move into Assam during the period of British rule. Following independence from colonial rule, many more Bengali Hindus migrated from this region into Assam as a result of the Partition of India in 1947, which led to the creation of Pakistan, comprising of West Pakistan and East Pakistan, with the latter roughly corresponding to East Bengal. The flow of migrants into Assam from this region continued, especially in the wake of the Liberation War in 1971 through which East Pakistan separated itself from Pakistan and established itself as Bangladesh. Lakhs of refugees took shelter in Assam during the 1971 war. Many of them returned back but a large many also stayed back. The other group about whom the ethnic Assamese were apprehensive about were the Hindu Bengalis, Bengali Muslim peasants and Marwaris who entered bureaucracy, agriculture and business respectively. These 'natives' were worried about being dominated by them in all spheres. This sense of insecurity and feeling of alienation made them conscious of their own identity vis-a-vis the immigrants. This feeling of insecurity was the genesis of the Assam agitation led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP).

The Assam Movement, spanning 1979 to 1985, was against illegal immigrants and their enfranchisement in the state. The conflicts between native population and migrants were so strong during this period that the 1981 census could not be held due to political unrest in the state. In August 1985, the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement signed the Assam Accord to bring an end to the agitation which had turned violent against Bengali Muslims. In the Accord, immigrants were classified into three main categories based on when they had entered India. Those who had entered India before 1966 were to be given citizenship rights, those who had entered between January 1966 and March 1971 were to be disenfranchised temporarily for a period of 10 years, and those who had entered after March 1971 were to be deported. Baruah (1999) writes that identifying Bangladeshi immigrants in Assam was a difficult task because of the historical association of East Bengal communities with Assam, as well as difficulties in legally determining who was an immigrant and when they had entered. As a result, these measures were difficult to implement, even when the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) – the political party formed by the organisations that had led the Assam Movement – was in power at the state-level between 1985-89 and 1996-2001.

Moreover, migration from Bangladesh to Assam also continued due to the difficulty of monitoring the Indo-Bangladesh border for both Hindu political immigrants and Muslim economic immigrants (Baruah 1999). Although there is a recognition that the migration is increasingly due to economic and ecological conditions in Bangladesh (see Hazarika 1994; 2000), there has been no consensus on how to counter this population movement. Hindu Bengalis and Bengali Muslims continue to be seen with animosity, as eating into the resources of Assam. Numerous statistics on the migrant and native population have been put forth, however, these are usually controversial. Even the census data has been unreliable for determining the scale of immigration into Assam since the census in Assam "has been far from a passive register of social facts" and has "been a tool in the political management of tensions over immigration" (Baruah 1999: 52).

Assam movement was assertion of Assamese identity. Parallel to the Assam Movement was the rise of a violent separatist movement, led by the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), asserting Assamese identity and stemming from tensions with the Indian

government around its neglect of the North-East. Thousands have died in clashes between ULFA and the Indian state. In the 1990s, Assam also saw the rise of ethnic movements, organized around particular tribal identities, which was linked to the state's inability / unwillingness to protect the rights of tribal groups as well as address the issue of immigration from Bangladesh.

One of these tribal ethnic movements is of the Bodos, who are part of an ethnic group called Bodo-Kachari, and are one of the early inhabitants of Assam. It has given rise to militant groups such as the National Democratic Front of Bodoland and the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force. Bodos are concentrated in the western part of Assam (part of Lower Assam) in Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Odalguri districts, which in 2003 were placed under the Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD) to be administered by Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). This is also the region wherein there has been continuous in-migration of Muslims over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from what was earlier East Bengal, later East Pakistan, and now Bangladesh. In early 2012, there was a violent clash between the Muslims settled in this region and the Bodos (see Choudhury 2012). The clash between Bodos and non-Bodos was not new. The first known major clash between Bodos and non-Bodos was in 1994, which made large number of Santhalis, Bengali Muslims, Bengali Hindus and Assamese Hindus in the region homeless and forced them to live in camps. It is alleged that these people continue to live in the camps.[9] Since the formation of BTAD, Bodo nationalism has been on the rise. Another tribal ethnic movement in Assam is of the Karbis. They inhabit Karbi Anglong district and Dima Hasao district (formerly known as the North Cachar Hills district) of central Assam.

The rise of these ethnic movements, insurgency movements and assertion of tribal nationalisms vis-à-vis Assamese nationalism have led to a strengthening of ethnic identities in Assam. With this historical background of migration and ethnic conflicts in Assam, let us return to migration into Guwahati in the 1970s and 1980s. This has led to formation of Autonomous Councils in the state. There are six Tribal Autonomous Councils; namely, Tiwa Autonomous Council at Marigaon, Rabha Autonomous Council at Goalpara, Deori Autonomous Council at Lakhimpur, Mishing Autonomous Council at Dhemaji, Thengal Kachari Autonomous Council at Titabor and Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council at Dibrugarh. Besides, there are three other autonomous district councils, Bodoland Territorial Council, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council[10]. This has led to fissured governance in the state has led to mistrusts among various councils and ensuing constant points of conflicts among the various ethnic groups[11].

Guwahati experienced a massive population increase in the 1971-81 and 1981-91 decades (Table 1). With Assam's capital shifting from Shillong to Guwahati in 1972, the latter's population grew with migrants pouring into the city. The migration was social and economic in nature. Poor people who were facing extreme poverty and hardship in rural areas of Assam came to Guwahati for survival. Some of these were people who had lost their land due to erosion caused by the river Brahmaputra. Slightly better lower middle class people came from various parts of Assam for employment opportunities and a better life. Well-off families also came due to the opportunities the city presented and since it has been the primate city in the region. Students came in large numbers, not only from other parts of Assam but also from some other North-Eastern states for education. There was also a flow of people from other states to earn livelihood in different economic activities. There has been migration from Bihar and as far away as Andhra Pradesh and Punjab since the colonial period. In fact, the Guwahati Municipal Corporation's colonies for its sanitation employees consist of many third

or fourth generation migrants from Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab (Desai et al 2012), who came in early 19th century to construct railways. The previously discussed history of migration into Assam and the politics that has emerged around it as well as the impacts of the insurgency movements (not only in Assam, which we have discussed above, but also in other parts of the North-East) are also likely to have contributed to migration into Guwahati at various times. Guwahati's decreasing population growth rate since 1991 means that migration rates have dropped, although many migrants continue to move to the city due to the various reasons outlined above.

The history of migration and ethnic conflict in Assam has not only contributed to migration into Guwahati, but with the settlement pattern in Guwahati reflecting many of the ethnic, religious and linguistic identities (discussed in the next section), these are also potential strife points within the city as in the rest of the state.

Another important conflict in Assam that has relevance for Guwahati is linked to land. Natural calamities on account of flooding and land erosion due to the Brahmaputra River have resulted in many displacements of people over time and their subsequent migration to other areas, often forest lands. Population increase has also created pressure on agrarian lands and there has been encroachment on the state's forest lands as a result. In absence of industrialisation and hence shift out of agriculture not happening, the dependence on land has increased. Land has therefore become a highly contested entity. The forest dwellers, many of whom have earlier gone through displacement and migration on account of multiple reasons, have been demanding a right to the forest lands they have occupied. The government has, however, often tried to evict them. In the 1970s, the protests against the evictions were led by the socialist party with the CPI(ML) and later the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) also joining in. The eviction drives reached their peak around 2002 in the Doyang-Tengani area of Golaghat district. The Doyang-Tengani peasant's movement against the evictions by the forest department saw the rise of Akhil Gogoi as a peasant leader. Gogoi established the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) in 2005 and over time KMSS extended the movement for land rights to some other districts having a high concentration of forest dwellers (Misra 2011). This ongoing land rights movement has found resonance in Guwahati which consists of a number of reserved forest areas.

Furthermore, since 1990s, a series of ethnic political mobilisations have also been emerged where the forests have been settled by an ethnic group different from the ethnic groups living in nearby villages (MOEF / MOTA Committee 2010). Fernandes (2008) writes that in the North-East, land shortage has resulted in ethnic conflicts. He gives various examples: the Naga-Kuki conflicts in Manipur and the Bodo-Santhal killings in Assam in the 1990s, the Dimasa-Hmar tension in Assam in 2003, and the Karbi-Pnar conflict in Assam in 2004. Loss of land combined with lack of new employment opportunities have resulted in every group trying to get exclusive rights over this limited resource. Given the symbiotic relationship with land, the conflicts that often become intense and violent, appear as in defence of the culture, identity and livelihood. Added to these dynamics has been the lacunae in the provisions of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 and its Rules, that has created a situation of conflict over land between various ethnic groups including those who were brought in as labour for the tea gardens, namely the Santhals, the Nepalis and other Scheduled Castes (Banerjee 2011). More recently, we have seen ethnic-religious conflict and violence between Bodos and Muslims in BTAD, which in essence is based in conflicts over land and resources (see Misra 2012). The intersection of ethnic identities and land conflicts is already

manifesting in Guwahati in certain ways, and these conflicts could develop along other ethnic axes in the future.
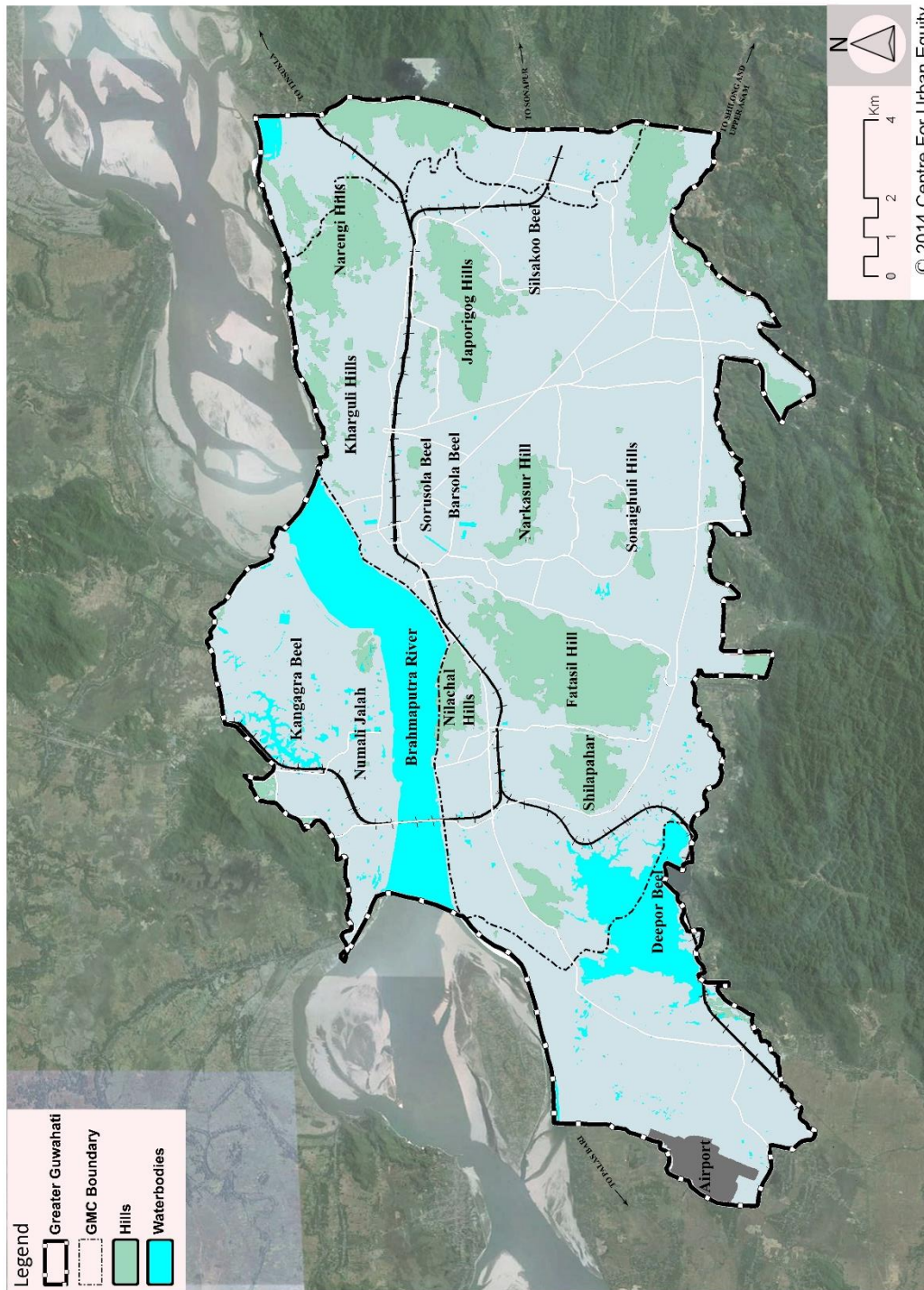
4. Urban Growth and Development

Guwahati has a mix of plain areas, low-lying marshy lands and hills, with the Brahmaputra river running across the length of the city in the north (Map 2). These geo-hydrological features of the city have impacted the physical growth of the city. Most of the older core administrative and commercial areas of Guwahati like Uzan Bazar, Fancy Bazar, Pan Bazar, Kachari and Paltan Bazar have developed along the banks of the Brahmaputra (see Map 3). Two other major magnets that developed on the river bank were the Kamakhya Temple on the Nilachal Hills and the Northeast Frontier Railways Headquarters in Maligaon. The Maligaon area has now developed as an important corridor with the development of the railroad linking main Guwahati city to North Guwahati on the other side of the river and the other states of India. The Inland Water Transport Authority (IWTA) ports and many smaller jetties are also on this road, where some amount of trade takes place. This is part of the National Waterway of India, which was formerly a core business trade route but which is now a small trade and transport route. The capital complex of Assam (the Secretariat) was developed at Dispur, south-east of the older core area. The Guwahati-Shillong (GS) link road, which connects the older core area to Dispur, has developed as an important commercial corridor with a densely-built residential area in the inner parts. Ganeshguri has developed as a sub-centre in the south along this corridor. Rapid development has led to new residential and commercial areas in the erstwhile peripheral zones of the city. The further expansion of the city in the south is restricted by the foothills of the Shillong plateau (Map 2).

The migration of different groups into the city over time, the link of certain groups to certain economic activities, the attachments to ethnic, religious and linguistic identity and the conflicts over migration discussed earlier have manifested in the form of many community-centric settlements. For example, Lakhtokia and Machkhowa has a predominance of Assamese Muslims; Hindi-speaking communities from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan are in Paltan Bazar, Fancy Bazar and Anthgaon; Bengali-speaking communities are in Pandu, and Maligaon and the Railway colonies; and Christians are in Christian Basti where the missionaries built churches (Saikia 1996). More recent Muslim migrants have concentrated in Hatigaon and Sijubari. Migrants from Bihar continue to flock to market areas and transportation hubs such as Maligaon and Narengi. Many tribals have concentrated in some peripheral hills. The Assamese Muslims are known as Goria and there is no tension between Assamese Muslims and Hindus.

There are a number of key processes relating to Guwahati's development that are important for understanding contemporary urban conflicts and struggles around land and the environment. This includes the history of displacement in/around Guwahati, the land regime, the growth of informal settlements including slums and the settlement and degradation of the hills and wetlands. Each of these are discussed in the next section.

Map 2: Guwahati hills and water bodies

Map 2: Guwahati hills and waterbodies

Legend

Greater Guwahati
GMC Boundary
Hills
Waterbodies

Narengi Hills
Silsakoo Beel
Japorigog Hills
Kharguli Hills
Sorusola Beel
Barsola Beel
Narkasur Hill
Sonaighuli Hills
Kangagra Beel
Numali Jalah
Brahmaputra River
Nilachal Hills
Fatasil Hill
Shilapahar
Deepor Beel
Airport

TO TEZPUR
TO SONAPUR
TO SHILLONG AND
UPPER ASSAM
TO JORABAT

N

0 1 2   4
Km

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Source: Map prepared by CUE

16

4.1. History of Displacement

The history of displacement as a result of Guwahati's growth and expansion is one of the reasons for the contemporary land conflicts. The Land Acquisition Act 1894 (LAA) is the enabling law that the state has used to acquire land. In many cases, this has displaced people or deprived them of their livelihood. Since the LAA does not define "public purpose," land acquisitions have also taken place for reasons that have little to do with public purpose. A study on development-induced displacement in Assam by Fernandes and Bharali (2011) uses government data to give some idea of the number of displaced persons (DPs) and number of project affected persons (PAPs) due to various projects in and around Guwahati (see Table 5). The DPs were those who had individual land rights and were forced to leave their homes; many were physically relocated, thus getting land for land. PAPs were those who lost some or most of their land as well as other sustenance; they were deprived of livelihood without physical relocation and were mostly given compensation. A few projects like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati and Guwahati University gave some Grade 4 jobs to the persons they displaced. However, compensation was unsatisfactory and there was no real rehabilitation of either the DPs or tdfdhe PAPs, leading to their impoverishment and marginalisation (Fernandes and Bharali 2011).[12]

Table 5: Land Acquired, Displaced Persons and Project Affected Persons under various projects in Greater Guwahati

Project	Year/Decade	Land Acquired (in acres)	Displaced Persons (DPs)	Project Affected Persons (PAPs)
Bamunimaidan Industrial	1959	110	39	298
Noonmati Refinery	1950s	4000	1000	446
BG Rly line in		600	61	420
NH 37		185	154	132
Exp. NH Narengi-		50	281	131
Borjhar Airport, Guwahati		143.62	303	650
Border Security Force			0	336
Defence for Army			28	4169
Battalion H.Q.			0	193
Air Force Bazzar			220	1716
AG office		12.75	0	451
Govt. of India Press	1961-70	58.98	72	94
Dispur Capital Complex	1960s &1970s	25.48	83	484
Rajbhawan		1.32	4	12
Guwahati University	1947-60	313.71		
Guwahati Medical College	1961-70,	242.59	9	212
Khanapara Veterinary	1951-70	107.32		
Indian Red Cross Hospital		1.55	0	15
IIT Guwahati	1990s to 2007	704	3500	0

* In some projects, the government records only show the private land acquired and the corresponding number of DPs and PAPs. Actual land used for the project is, however, much more and includes CPR lands with their corresponding number of displaced and project-affected persons. Fernandes and Bharali (2011) have tried to take these CPR lands into account to estimate the total number of DPs and PAPs for these projects.
Source: Collated from Fernandes and Bharali 2011

Moreover, many were not even recognized by the government as displaced or project-affected. As Fernandes and Bharali (2011) explain, this is because under the LAA, rehabilitation / compensation was only given for individually-owned land. However,

thousands of families were living on community-controlled lands or were dependent on such lands for livelihood. They were mainly tribals and persons belonging to the poorest among the other backward castes (OBCs) such as quarry and fish workers. They did not have individual land rights for these community assets or Common Property Resources (CPRs), which were managed according to the community-based customary law. Since there was no legal framework to deal with CPRs, the government simply did not recognize community claims on these lands and the lands were considered state property while the communities were turned into "encroachers." As a result, the CPR lands were handed over for various projects through an inter-departmental agreement or Government Order (GO). Many CPR-dependents were considered to be PAPs although in reality they should have been considered as DPs since they were physically displaced. They should thus have been physically relocated but in most cases they were not. In the absence of resettlement, those who got compensation had to spend this amount on a new house. Many others were excluded from both the DP and PAP lists (Fernandes and Bharali 2011). This has created extensive dispossessions in the Greater Guwahati area as the city has developed. Since there is no official record of the number of CPR-dependents that were displaced or project-affected, in some projects such as the Borjhar Airport and the Dispur Capital Complex, Fernandes and Bharali (2011) have made some estimates of the actual number of displaced and project affected persons (In Table 5, see the figures in brackets for these two projects). These estimates give us a glimpse into the actual numbers of people who have been displaced as the city has developed.

Other scholars have also put forth some estimates. Hussain & Phanjoubham (2007) have estimated displacement of about 1 lakh people when Assam and Meghalaya became separate states and Assam's capital was shifted from Shillong to Dispur, South-west of the old core area of Guwahati. They write of displacements carried out to build the Dispur administrative blocks and residential colonies around it, and for the Assam Zoo and Botanical Park.

The majority of those displaced in and around Guwahati were from the Karbi and Bodo tribal communities (Hussain & Phanjoubham 2007). Many of those who were displaced thus had to now spend money on immediate needs like food, which they earlier used to get from their CPRs, leading to deterioration in access to food. They also experienced deterioration in their social and cultural status. Alienation of their livelihood disrupted their traditional lifestyle, social networks and cultural practices (Fernandes & Bharali 2011). Many of the displaced and dispossessed moved into other areas of the city, peripheral areas and hills in and around the city. This is one of the processes that has contributed to the most conflictual issue in Guwahati today, which is of the hill settlements, especially those on Reserve Forest lands, and the land rights of its hill dwellers, many of whom are tribals and poor and marginalized migrants.

4.2. The Land Regime

In Guwahati, as in the rest of Assam, large tracts of land were either owned by the landlords or were with the government, which also included lands under forests and wetlands. Further, most of the lands were in the form of CPRs, huge swathes of such CPR lands, which, under the colonial rule, begun to be considered as state property (Fernandes et al 2013). Some of the lands were given away as grants to temples and were called debottar lands. The government lands were given away for settlement through lease rights known as *pattas*. It is important to briefly locate this current situation in historical context. Under the colonial state, there was a shift towards establishing a system of individual land rights. Wherever land did not have individual owners, it was considered to be state property. Those who lived on the CPR lands were considered encroachers with no land rights. On the other hand, the state

brought out legislations by which it could distribute this land through individual *patta* (lease). The process of giving *patta* by the state in Assam is referred to as the "process of settlement."

The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886, was the important legislation enacted to enable the process of settlement. Through this legislation, the colonial state began to give settlement to people on lands that had heretofore been governed through the customary rights of communities but were now considered as state property by the colonial state. On these lands, the legislation thus enabled not only a change in the nature of land rights (from customary collective rights to documented individual lease) but also the transfer of land rights from tribals and other marginalized communities to others. This process of settlement as well as a transformation in who got and who did not get access and rights to land has continued in the post-independence period. Those who have got *patta* for a plot of land through the process of settlement consider this as their private land since the *patta* is inheritable and also transferable after a certain period (thus having the characteristics of private land).

The above process of settlement applies also to Guwahati where most of the land is State government land, large tracts being under the reserved forests or wetlands. The Assam Land Policy of 1989 was made under the parent act of 1886.[13] Currently, lease / *pattas* are given under this policy. Section 14.3 of the Policy states that land within Greater Guwahati (and any other town) notified under Government Notification No. RSR-21/59/126 dated October 1, 1966 may be settled on payment of premium with indigenous persons of the state. The preference should be given to an indigenous person who has no land in his name or in the name of any member of his family and who has been in occupation of government land for last 15 years. The land area for which *patta* can be given is 1 katha 5 lessa (1.25 katha which is about 335 sq.m.). Currently, under the 1989 Land Policy, the Revenue Department issues *miyadi patta* (periodic *patta*) in Guwahati.[14] It is for a period of 30 years although in practice it is in perpetuity. The *patta* cannot be sold for 10 years but can be mortgaged. The premium to be paid is determined as per the Zonal Valuation Report.

In this context, since (i) buying *miyadi patta* land is expensive, (ii) there is no formal land supply that is more affordable, and (iii) the 1989 Land Policy has a provision for giving *miyadi patta* to those who have occupied State government land for 15 years, for many, accessing land and getting land rights actually depends on occupying government land for a period of 15 years. Moreover, having one's own land (*maati*) is highly valued amongst the people of Assam as in India. All this has encouraged people – be it the urban poor or the middle class for whom buying *miyadi patta* land from a *miyadi patta* holder is too expensive.

Informal occupation of land to has two roots. After the enactment of the Urban Land Ceiling (ULC) Act, many middlemen entered the land market to purchase the ceiling lands from the affected farmers and sell them off in the informal market. The areas that developed in this ways are Zoo Road, Narangi, Ganeshguri, Dispur, Supermarket area, Six-mile, Mathura Nagar- backside of Down Town Hospital, Hatigaon, Sijubari, Notbama, Beltola, Lal Ganesh, etc. as per the local experts. Some of the state government lands were informally occupied through a process referred to as *dakhal* in Guwahati. This was also engineered by the middlemen. Those with more money would buy land from someone who has done *dakhal* on state government land or buy *eksonia patta* land (land with lease for 1 year), however, for the poor and lower middle class even *ek sonya patta* land is expensive. What is important to realise here is that whether today the land is *miyadi patta* land or *ek sonya patta* land, in most cases, this would have first involved *dakhal*. *Dakhal* has been done in central city areas as well as on peripheral lands of the city.

After living on state government land for a period of 15 years, people can apply for *miyadi patta* under the 1989 Land Policy. However, in recent years, despite the urban poor and middle-class having informally occupied State government land in Guwahati for long durations and some even applying for *miyadi patta*, the State government has not given these *pattas*. There are a number of reasons for the denial of *patta*, some of which we shall outline in Part II of the City Profile.

Moreover, these processes of *dakhal* and the buying and selling (referred to as "transfer") of *dakhal* land and *ek sonya patta* land have created a vibrant informal land market across the city. With the middle class also turning towards this land market to fulfil its demands for land, one also sees gentrification in the informal land market in more central areas of the city. As a result, the poorer groups who might have occupied State government land in more central areas through *dakhal* have sold out over time and moved to the hills and more peripheral areas. Even the hills in the central areas seem to have gentrified over time, except some of their upper parts. Even here, obtaining *miyadi patta* has become difficult as the State government had suspended issuance of these pattas in recent years. In Kalapahar hill, which is in the central part of the city, in one settlement of about 70 households named Nizarapara, none of the households had *miyadi patta* although many had *ek sonya patta* (Desai et al 2012). In adjoining Narkasur hill, in one settlement of about 100 households named Nutannagar, only eight households had *miyadi patta*.[15] *Ek sonya patta* are given only on government lands and not on forest lands. Hence, it is harder to obtain a *patta* in the settlements on the hills.

There are two other processes that are significant for understanding the land regime in Guwahati. First is that large areas of Greater Guwahati used to be or continue to be reserved as tribal belts to safeguard the rights of tribals and prevent tribal land alienation (in entire Assam there are several tribal belts and more than 25 tribal blocks). Under Chapter X of Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886, only certain tribal groups can have land rights or can participate in the selling and purchase of land within these belts (see Talukdar 2007). However, the state has sometimes de-reserved these tribal belts for the purpose of urban development. For instance, there were areas in Greater Guwahati that were under the South Kamrup Tribal Belt prior to the shifting of the State capital to Dispur. To develop Dispur and to expand Guwahati city, the area falling under the South Kamrup Tribal Belt was de-reserved (The Assam Tribune 2011). There are other tribal belts in the peri-urban areas of Guwahati that are threatened with de-reservation due to land acquisition by the state. There is also a threat of tribal land alienation in these areas due to the land mafia. Tribal land has also been alienated through *benami* transactions done by land mafias and rich people.[16]

Second is that over the past couple of decades, the land regime in Guwahati has also been shaped by the State government's land allocations to the business class and the emergence of what is commonly referred to as the "land mafia." The were the middlemen, assisting in the sale of ceiling surplus land or carrying out *dakhal* on government land, followed by on the wetlands and hill lands. These processes are little understood even as activists have been bringing these issues to light through the media and protesting against them. A letter written in 2011 by Dhiren Baruah, member of the NGO Save Guwahati Build Guwahati, to Assam's Chief Minister states that in last 25 years, land has been transferred from indigenous landholders to business class at a phenomenal rate. The indigenous dwellers themselves have been selling of the CPR lands they were occupying. On the other hand, the state government has been allotting government and also wetland lands to the since Guwahati became the capital of Assam. Some of these may include The Assam Land Requisition and Acquisition

Act, 1964 (amended in 1985) and The Assam Assessment of Revenue Free Waste Land Grants Act, 1948.

Large areas of public land including forest lands, hills, wetlands and riverside areas are also going to the hands of land mafias. In a press conference in 2011, Guwahati Mati Pattakaran Sangram Samiti (GMPSS) stated that more than 15,000 bighas of land in city forests, wetlands and even *miyadi patta* land were in the grip of gangs of land mafias. The General Secretary of GMPSS referred to their survey, which showed that 4,000 bighas of land in Soonsali area were illegally occupied by the land mafia[17] and about 8,000 bighas of forest land was occupied by a similar gang. Land-grabbers were found to have taken control of 2,000 bighas of *patta* land in the city's plain areas and grabbed 1,000 bighas of *ek sonya patta* land. GMPSS argued that gangs of land mafia were forcefully taking control of land, either occupied by the poor or on hills and wetlands, and were selling them to business and corporate groups at sky-high prices (The Telegraph 2011). In fact, the KMSS has alleged that a five star hotel, Radisson Blu, a joint venture of the GMDA and a private business house was built on Deepor beel. Not just that, another hotel, Ginger Hotel, was constructed on Silsako beel of the city. The question that KMSS asked was why these hotels were given legal permissions to construct on the beels when the houses of the poor were being demolished[18]. These processes have fuelled conflicts between land for shelter and social reproduction versus land for primitive accumulation.

With the recognition of many land-grabbing incidents in Assam and Guwahati, the State government has enacted The Assam Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act, 2010. Here, land grabbing is defined as, "every activity of land grabber to occupy or attempting to occupy with or without the use of force, threat, intimidation and deceit, any land over which they have no ownership." Under this Act, land grabbing is a punishable offence. A task force headed by the deputy commissioner was constituted in 2012 to track cases of land grabbing and initiate action under the Act (Assam Tribune 2012a). However, it is important to note that the definition of land grabbing in the Act is itself problematic as the people who have been living on government and forest land since many years could also be considered as land grabbers. Cases related to land grabbing are pending in most of the police stations in the city (The Telegraph 2011).

Forest related legislations and the manner of their implementation also have influence on the land regime in Guwahati since the city has some Reserved Forests. One of these legislations is the Assam Forest Regulation, 1891, which was amended in 1995 through The Assam Forest Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1995. The Assam Forest Regulation (henceforth referred as Regulation) gives powers to the State government to declare any area as Reserved Forest (RF) and appoint a Forest-settlement-officer. The forest-settlement-officer is to decide the rights over the RF lands. The rights can be related to grazing or forest produce at the time of declaring any area as RF. Those given these rights cannot transfer it through grant, sale, lease or mortgage and only commute the same through inheritance. The Regulation prohibits any clearance of the forest area, quarrying, making of charcoal and collecting or removing any forest-produce. Even *jhum* cultivation, which is a traditional form of cultivation in the hills, is to be permitted only at the discretion of the said officer. Thus, this Regulation takes away all the rights of the traditional inhabitants or settlers on RF lands (Uzir 2013). Thus, the settlers on the hills in and around Guwahati, whose lands are declared as RF lands, are considered illegal and have ongoing conflict with the State Forest Department. Another legislation that could have influence in the future (it is not being implemented yet) is the Central government's The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers

(Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (this is discussed in Part II). There are also legislations linked to protection of the ecology such as The Assam Hill Land and Ecological Sites (Prevention and Management) Act, 2006 and the Guwahati Water Bodies (Preservation and Conservation) Act, 2008 (both discussed in a later section) and the manner of their implementation that are likely to have influence on the land regime in Guwahati.

4.3. Growth of Informal Settlements and Slums

Formal sector housing, including formal sector rental housing, is unaffordable to the urban poor. Government agencies have also not done much about fulfilling the housing needs of the poor in Guwahati. The Assam State Housing Board (ASHB), which was established in 1974, has built a total of 1,824 rental-housing units at several locations in the city. This involves Economically Weaker Section (EWS), Low Income Groups (LIG) and Middle Income Group (MIG) units for Class III and IV government employees, including retired employees. Research at one of the sites revealed that many of ASHB's EWS and LIG rental units are taken up by non-poor families. As a result, the urban poor and low-income groups have turned to the informal land and housing sector, including the informal rental sector. Location of economic activities and availability of land are important factors affecting the growth and distribution of the informal settlements of the poor in the city.

Desai & Mahadevia (2013) categorise the informal housing sector into several housing sub-markets created through the land and development processes. Through the informal occupation (*dakhal*) of public and private lands, there are settlements on Railway lands, the State government's Revenue lands (which are located in the plains, on swampy lands and in the hills), the State government's Reserve Forest (RF) lands (which are mostly in the hills), private lands earmarked for acquisition and other private lands. Through alienation of land, there are commercial informal subdivisions of private agricultural lands on the city's periphery. Note that most of the above private lands are essentially *patta* lands. Many of the informal owner-occupants in these sub-markets are also landlords and have developed rental units. Rental housing is found in all these sub-markets to a greater or lesser degree. 46 per cent of dwelling units in Guwahati are rented, and a large proportion of these are likely to be in these informal settlements catering to the urban poor and low-income groups.

As mentioned in the previous section, the poor as well as the middle class have accessed *dakhal* land in Guwahati. While the informal settlements of the middle class consist of good quality housing and basic services, many of the informal settlements of the poor consist of poor quality housing and basic services. The level of services mostly depends on community mobilization through the formation of unnayan samitis, and often also political patronage (see Desai 2012b). Over the years GMC has identified some of these settlements as "slums" in order to extend government programmes to them. Earlier, GMC had identified 26 settlements as slums; they had a total population of 1.6 lakh people (GMC 2006; GMDA 2009). Later, the Guwahati City Slum Policy 2009 identified 90 slums having 167,769 population (GMC 2009) (see Map 4). The GMC survey of 2012 identified 217 slum pockets with a population of 1.39 lakh.[19] The drastic change in number of slums is due to the change in definition of slums. In 2009, a pocket with 25-30 households and lacking basic amenities was considered as slum while for the survey of 2012, a pocket with 10-15 households and without basic amenities was considered as slum. However, one may note that according to this data, while the number of slums has increased, the slum population has decreased. These numbers do not tally with the GMC work order for the survey of 113 slums under the Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY)[20].

Map 4: Location of Slums identified in the Guwahati City Slum Policy 2009
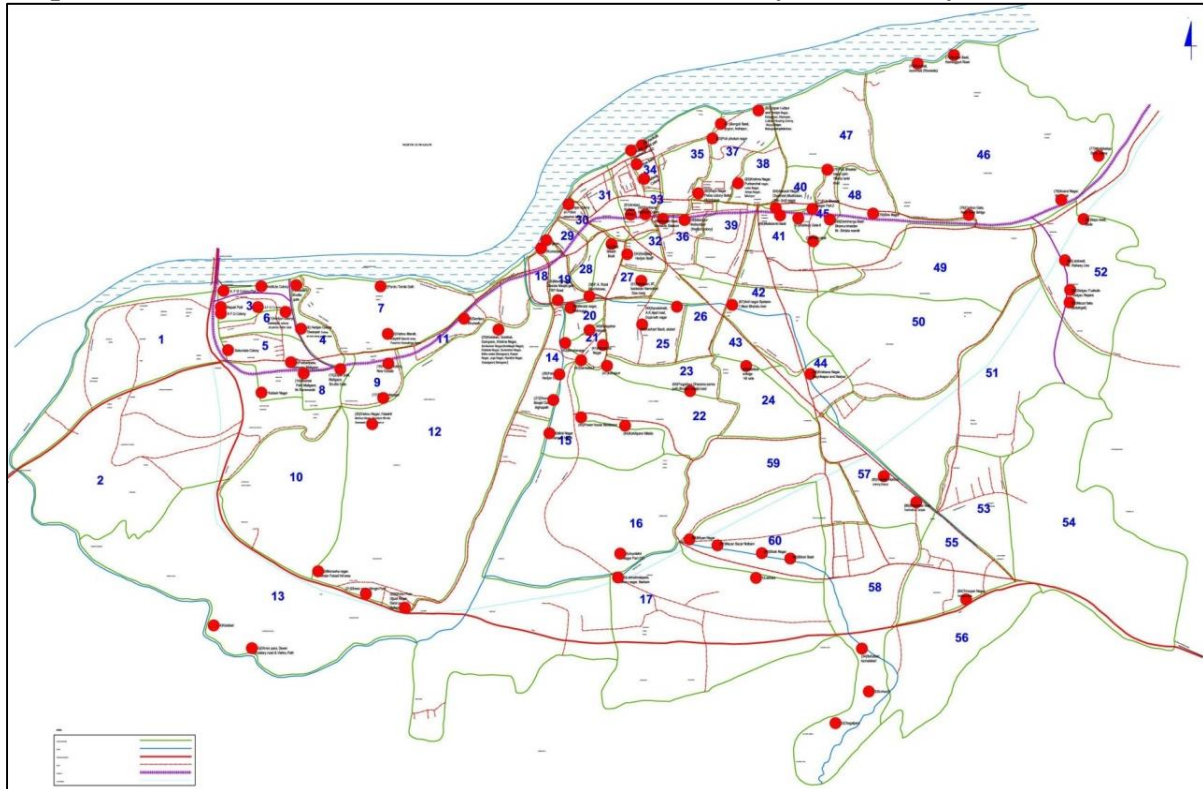
Source: GMC.

The most recent programme for housing for the urban poor was JNNURM's sub-mission of Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP). Under this, three sites were proposed for construction of housing for the urban poor: Fatasil, Morasoli and Amingaon. Only the Morsali site has been completed where GMC built 128 dwelling units. In Fatasil approximately 400 dwelling units have been constructed so far against the proposed 1,104 dwelling units. In Amingaon, where 1,028 dwelling units were to be built, construction work has not even been started. The dwelling units at Morasali and Fatasil have been allotted to the GMC Class IV employees who used to earlier live in dilapidated houses and hutments on the same land. Slum free city planning is now being done under Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY), the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MHUPA). The GMC's 2012 slum survey was done with the purpose of preparing a Slum Free City Plan of Action under RAY. However, the very slow progress on RAY so far suggests that it will not help the urban poor much.

As discussed in the previous section, there is a provision in the policy for those who have done *dakhal* on State government land to apply for *miyadi patta* after 15 years of occupying this land. However, there is no such policy provision for the Railway lands. As a result, one of the important issues in the context of informal settlements and slums in Guwahati is that of the insecurity of many of the Railway settlements. As per GMC's 2009 slum survey, 23 per cent of slums are on railway land in Guwahati (GMC 2009).[21] In Guwahati, slums on railway land comprise of three types. The first are the slums on vacant land adjacent to the railway tracks. Where the vacant land adjacent to the railway tracks are narrow strips of land (for example, between Lakhtokia gate number 1 to gate number 5), there are absolutely no basic services provided for the hutments. Evictions take place every year along these railway tracks and the shelters are almost entirely wiped out. Where the land parcels along the tracks are somewhat larger (for example, in Bhootnath and Santipur), evictions used to take place earlier

but have now stopped since some years. During one of the evictions, people had occupied the tracks in protest. Another time, they had approached Hemant Talukdar, their MLA, who called the General Manager (G.M.) of the Railways and pressurised him to stop the evictions. The evictions have now ceased because the residents have left a buffer space between the tracks and their houses. The second type of slums on railway land is the hutments that have been made in the Railway Colonies, on the vacant lands of the colonies (for example, in the Railway Colonies in Bamunimaidan and Gotanagar). These hutments also face demolitions sometimes. The third type comprises of slums on large parcels of railway land that are not located near any railway track. Evictions have not taken place in these slums since quite many years although there is fear amongst some residents that evictions might take place some day because of the landownership (for example, Shakuntala Colony and Kailashnagar in the Pandu area) (see Desai 2012b). The demolitions by the railway authorities in the first two types of railway land slums are often brutal, with the railway police assaulting people and damaging their meagre properties. Sometimes, the evictions also cause conflict and violence between the poor squatters and the railway administration. In November 2013, the local people injured four Railway Police Force persons while they were trying to remove unauthorised structures in the Railway Colony at Central Gotanagar (The Assam Tribune 2013b).

Another important issue is of the hill settlements, particularly those on Reserve Forest lands, whose inhabitants include many tribal communities and poor and marginalized migrants. This is, in fact, a burning issue in Guwahati today. Here we would like to note that while the 90 slums identified under the Guwahati City Slum Policy 2009 included over 20 slums (with 5,380 households) which are "scattered hill side housing," not all the hill settlements with poor and low-income groups living in them seem to have been identified as slums. We will discuss the hill settlements and related issues in detail in Part II of the City Profile.

4.4. The Settlement and Degradation of Hills and Wetlands

Guwahati's hills have gradually been settled by different socio-economic groups. The urban poor and low-income groups on the hills seem to comprise of three main groups.[22] The first group is tribals who were displaced from Guwahati's plains which led many of them to move to the hills. Some of this displacement was forced as it occurred through land acquisition but in some cases, it seems that tribals voluntarily sold their land in the plains to non-tribals and moved to both peripheral urban areas and the hills. A second group is migrants who are tribals, who have been displaced from rural parts of Assam by development projects and natural calamities as well as those who have fled from ethnic conflicts and poor livelihoods in various parts of Assam. A third group is migrants who are poor and low-income non-tribals, both from within Assam and from other states, who have come to Guwahati in search of livelihood and opportunities, and have increasingly gone to live in the hills because of the lack of vacant lands and high cost of land and housing in the informal sector in the plains. While many among the middle class have been denied land rights in Guwahati, it is these poor and low-income groups living on the Reserve Forest lands in the hills that have borne the brunt of the state's denial of land rights. The state has attempted to label these as "hill encroachments" and remove them in the name of ecological concerns.

Certainly, there are serious ecological concerns plaguing Guwahati today. There has been serious degradation of the hills as the city has developed. Cutting of the hills and illegal tree felling on them has led to massive erosion, destruction of the hills, landslides and flash floods. The city's Master Plan for 2025, which has been prepared by GMDA states that this degradation has occurred due to cutting into the natural slopes to make the land habitable,

leading to loss of vegetation, soil loss and soil erosion, and vulnerability to landslides. GMDA has therefore identified the hills as "eco-sensitive zones" and the hill settlements on Reserve Forest lands as "encroachments" requiring resettlement and rehabilitation (GMDA 2009). However, the degradation of the hills has occurred due to a number of other reasons. Stone quarrying in the hills is one of these reasons. Bera (2011a) refers to massive hill cutting to fill the city's wetlands and make them fit for development. Furthermore, cutting into the natural slopes for habitation on the hills has not only been done by poor and lower-income tribals and non-tribals, but also by many influential politicians and companies. The latter have, in fact, been allotted land in the hills by the state administration even as the poorer dwellers have not been given land rights in the hills. For instance, on Lalmati hill, while the poorer inhabitants have not been given *patta*, a 10-hectare luxury residential complex called "Shangri-La – Heaven on Earth" is planned that would cut into the hill. In 2011, Bera (2011a) wrote that even as the project was awaiting clearance from the Union Environment ministry, the developers were already accepting bookings. Some lands on Narkasur hill have been given for Guwahati Medical College and the residential areas for the nursing staff and also to the Reserve Police battalion.

Guwahati's wetlands (called *beel* in Assamese) have also been degrading. Reasons are natural siltation, earth filling, encroachment, and garbage dumping. In fact, a large part of Guwahati has developed on wetlands leading to their destruction. After the economic boom in the 1990s, wetlands were sold dirt-cheap. Along the Guwahati to Dispur National Highway, the wetlands have been developed with commercial complexes and apartments. Residential areas like Tarunnagar and Lachitnagar (Bera 2011b). Areas like Six Mile and Jalukbari had wetlands. Marshy areas have also been settled by the urban poor and gradually filled up; as the value of the land has increases they get transferred to economically well-off people. In absence of access to any other land, large settlements of the poor have emerged by filling up low-lying areas at Bhaskarnagar near R.G. Baruah Road, and on marshy land near Pandu area (Borah & Gogoi 2012). In recent years, the government has also allotted large parcels of land in the wetlands of North Guwahati to public and private institutions. The degrading condition of some of the wetlands is discussed below.

Deepor Beel is located in the South-western part of Guwahati. It was listed as a wetland under the Ramsar Convention in November 2002. As a Ramsar site, conservation measures should have been undertaken. However, after three years of listing under the Ramsar Convention, a 24-hectare municipal dumpyard was designated in the eastern corner of Deepor, degrading the environment further. Large-scale encroachments, quarrying, heavy siltation from the denuded hills, accumulation of filth and waste from Bharalu and Bahini rivers, unregulated fishing practices and invasion of aquatic weeds made the situation worse. Squatter colonies have also emerged. As a result, once spread over 40 sq.km. (Ramsar notification was for 40.1 sq.km.), the wetland has now shrunk to 5 sq.km. In 2008, a 4.1 km area of Deepor was notified as a wildlife sanctuary (Bera 2011a; 2011b).

Silsako Beel is located in the South-eastern part of the city. Earlier it was spread over 120 hectares, but the construction of a multiplex, tennis court, a hotel owned by the Tata Group, a hotel management institute, and a research institute has shrunk the wetland. On the other side of this wetland there are over 1,000 houses where families have been residing since about 15 years. Most of them are migrants driven to the city due to the collapse of the rural and agricultural economy in the post-1990s period (Bera 2011b). But, some are also middleclass households.

Sola Beel, which consists of the Borsola Beel and Sorusola Beel, is situated near Paltan Bazar. Sorusola Beel serves the Chandmari, Gandhibasti, Solapur, Ulubari, Manipuribasti, Fancy Bazar, Panbazar, Lakhtokia, Tokobari, and AT Road areas as a stormwater reservoir. Over the years, the State government had issued pattas to people residing on these beels. Due to this, the *beel* was blocked, creating artificial floods in Lakhtokia, Krishnanagar, Chatribari and other areas. The same problem occurred on the nearby Borsola Beel. In July 1995, a high-level committee on wetland conservation had taken a resolution on the conservation of the *beel*. This had stated that no more settlement should be given in and around the Sola Beel. The resolution had also called for steps by the Revenue Department to cancel all the allotments made earlier in and around the wetland area. Following the decision of the committee, the Revenue Department had cancelled allotment on about 30 *bighas*[23] of the wetland area through a letter. But ignoring the committee's resolution, in 2006, the Revenue Department had allotted land inside a part of Sorusola Beel to the K.C. Das College, an eye hospital and some businessmen. The people residing in its fringe areas also extended the areas under their possession by encroaching upon the *beel* land. Borsola Beel was given to the Tourism department and to some private businessmen. In fact, in the midst of this, in 2000, the Solabeel Unnayan Samiti had moved the High Court for conservation of the Beel. Even after the High Court had ordered the State government to take care of the wetlands in the city, the Revenue Department had allotted land in the Beel in 2006 for construction. The Unnayan Samiti then moved the High Court against the administration for contempt of the court. The High Court issued a stay order in 2006 on the building project (CSE, n.d.). By 2012, the Sorusola Beel had lost 25 *bighas* of its 45 *bighas* and the Borsola Beel had lost 20 of its 85-90 *bighas* (The Sentinel 2012).

All around the city, in the rural settlements as well, which may integrate with GMC area in the future, *beels* are being encroached upon, with houses on stilts to begin with. In Guwahati, the Hansora and Damol wetlands already have disappeared completely (Map in Bera 2011b). With the disappearance or eutrophication of the wetlands, which serve as storm water basins, the incidence of flash floods has increased in Guwahati. This led to the Guwahati Water Bodies (Preservation and Conservation) Act, 2008, which notified the Sorusola, Borsola, Silsako, Deepor and Bondajan water-bodies for protection and conservation. However, it has failed to bring any positive changes. The Kamrup Metro district administration constituted four task forces in January 2013 for the preservation, protection, regulation and maintenance of the two important natural water-bodies of the city, Silsako Beel and Bondjan (Kalita 2013). Prior to this The Assam Hill Land and Ecological Sites (Prevention and Management) Act, 2006, had been enacted to provide for preservation, protection, regulation, acquisition, and maintenance of hill land and other ecological sites of the State and more specifically within the jurisdiction of the GMC. The implementing authority is the State Government through formation of Advisory Committees, chaired by the Commissioner of Lower Assam Division for Guwahati and the respective commissioner of the other divisions in the rest of the State. This legislation is to prohibit anyone indulging in (i) any earth cutting activities or carrying any portion of a hill land causing damage or destruction of such hill, (ii) removal or filling up or dredging or any way altering any of the ecological sites, and (iii) undertaking any such activity which may cause damage or destruction to the vegetative cover and wildlife resources of any designated area (Das 2012).

Bera (2011a) calls the settlement and development of the wetlands as a "legalized grab by the high and mighty." The same could be said of some of the hills. There is also illegal land grabbing happening in the hills and wetlands as briefly mentioned in the earlier discussion of the land regime. Yet, it is the poor hill dwellers, especially those on the Reserve Forest lands,

and landless people residing on the peripheries of the wetlands who bear the brunt of the eviction attempts by the administration in response to the impacts that the destruction of the hills and wetlands has had on Guwahati's ecological balance.

5. Urban Planning and Governance

There are several authorities and government departments involved in urban planning and governance. The main ones are Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC), Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) and Guwahati Development Department (GDD).

GMC was formed in 1971. The extension of the municipal limits led to an increase in the municipal area from 43.82 sq. km in 1971 to 216.79 sq. km in 1991. The municipal limit has not been extended since 1991. GMC is the elected local body and each of the 31 municipal wards is represented by elected ward councillors and ward members. Ward Committees consisting of Area Sabhas are to be formed in each ward as per the Assam Nagar Raj Act, 2007. Ward Committees, with the assistance of Area Sabhas, are supposed to prepare an Annual Plan with budget for their ward, however, the Nagar Raj Act has been implemented only partially yet.

GMDA was formed in 1992 (replacing the erstwhile Guwahati Development Authority) and is responsible for the preparation of the Master Plan for the Guwahati metropolitan area (GMA) which covers 262 sq. km. GDD, which is a department of the Government of Assam, and is directly under the control of the Chief Minister of Assam, coordinates among various city and state-level authorities such as GMC, GMDA, AUWS&SB and ASHB. It has a technical wing for matters concerning urban and regional planning, strategies, research appraisal and monitoring of Central government schemes and development policies in Guwahati.

5.1. State, Infrastructure and Services

GMC, GMDA and a host of para-statals play a role in infrastructure and services provision in Guwahati. GMC's prime responsibility is to grant building permission and provide and maintain urban infrastructure (road, streetlights, etc) and services (water supply, sewerage and drainage facilities) in the municipal area through its annual budget. Infrastructure and services like roads and bore-wells are also provided by GMC and the other authorities mentioned below through funds allocated to the MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) and MP (Member of Parliament) for local area development in their constituency. GMDA provides infrastructure and services in the GMDA area.

Assam Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board (AUWS&SB), which was formed under The Assam Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board Act, 1985, and Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water and Sewerage Board (GMDWSB), formed in 2011 under The Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water and Sewerage Board Act, 2009, are involved in planning and provision of water supply and sanitation facilities in Guwahati. Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) is also involved in water supply provision. Thus, as of now, three agencies, AUWS&SB, GMDWSB and PHED are involved in water supply provision in the city, which covers 30 per cent of the city's residents. The water supply to the rest of the population is through private handpumps or wells and tankers.[24] The Flood Control Department (FCD) and Public Works Department (PWD) also play a role in the planning and design, construction and operation and maintenance of the water, sewerage, drainage, roads

and street lighting (GMC 2006). The multiple agencies with similar functions have compounded the problems of water supply and sanitation rather than solving them.

The budget of the GMC is very small. In 2004-05, the GMC budget size was only Rs. 37.34 crores (GMC 2006). This amount is so small because most of the expenditures in the city are by the Guwahati Development Department (GDD), whose total budget for the year 2013-14 was Rs. 492.18 crores,[25] of which only 3.25 per cent was on capital projects. Of the total revenue account budget provision of Rs. 476.18 crores, Rs. 208.18 crores was for Guwahati Water Supply Scheme (GMDA), which is an Externally Aided Project by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); another Rs. 21 crores from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) grant for Assam Infrastructure Project and Rs. 184.83 crores as Central government grant for the JNNURM. The poor conditions of municipal finance in Guwahati reflects in the poor condition of infrastructure and services in the city. Inspite of that, the city is overwhelmed by flyover construction, indicating the priority of both the GMC as well as the State government.

5.2. Community Governance Structures[26]

Guwahati has different types of community organisations like unnayan samitis (development councils), mahila samitis (women's groups) and youth clubs. In informal settlements, they play an important role in the development of the neighbourhoods. In a study of eleven unnayan samitis across Guwahati, majority were found to be more than three years old, with almost half of them formed more than a decade ago (Desai 2012). Most of the mahila samitis were also found to be more than three years old. The unnayan samitis were found to be quite broad-based in terms of comprising of members from all the owner households in the settlement, thus including all the ethnic and religious groups in the settlement. However, the study was unable to conclude whether the samitis were truly inclusive and which individuals and social groups did or did not have a voice in it. Tenants in the informal settlements were the one group that were excluded from the unnayan samitis.

Unnayan samitis, and mahila samitis and youth clubs in some settlements, play a significant role in improvement of infrastructure and services in the neighbourhood. This is done through two ways: collective self-help and seeking political patronage. In the absence of adequate infrastructure and services, these community organisations participate in the building of infrastructures of water, drainage, roads and street-lights. They collect regular monthly fees from their members and use these for development works and other activities (like building a temple or celebrating a festival) as well as collect one-time contributions from their members for specific development purposes. In some rare cases, even tenants have contributed towards this. Some unnayan samitis also organise and motivate its members to contribute their labour. These community organisations also seek political patronage (and some organisations are, in fact, formed with the support of a political leader like the MLA or municipal councillor). They make appeals and applications to their elected representatives, whose support is crucial for obtaining funds for the development of the neighbourhood and for getting various government departments to make bore-wells, roads, drainage, etc, in their neighbourhoods. Their success varies widely in obtaining this support and often the realisation of benefits through political patronage also fluctuates.

PART II: CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE EMANATING FROM LAND, PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE REGIMES

Part II of the paper identifies and discusses some of the key arenas of conflicts and violence that are linked to land, planning and governance regimes in the city. It outlines the conflicts in Guwahati on account of the land regime and various legislations and policies for the regulation and protection of natural resources, focusing on the informal hill settlements. It also outlines conflicts on account of lack of public infrastructure and service provision in the informal settlements, again focusing on the hill settlements. As mentioned earlier, only 30 per cent of the water supply in the city is through the three agencies of the state. The rest of the households manage to access water through their individual efforts such as putting in hand-pumps or having individual wells or purchasing water through tankers or through community efforts under the banner of local unnayan samitis. Conflicts sometimes emerge in this context on account of lack of state presence in the public welfare space and lack of planning that would make that possible. We also outline conflicts with regard to access to space for street vendors, which are on account of the planning and governance regime in the city. Finally, we outline the violence faced by women accessing and using public transport. The issue of women's safety and security in accessing and using public transport also has links with urban planning through mobility options in the city and road design and infrastructure provision for safety. By discussing each of these three specific arenas of conflict and violence, we present the nature of conflicts experienced in the day-to-day life by the poor and low-income residents of Guwahati on account of land, planning and governance regimes in the city. These arenas of conflict and violence have been selected as focus areas of research under this project and this discussion sets the stage for detailed case studies for research.

6. Informal Settlement of the Hills

The settlements in the hills have been growing since the 1970s when Meghalaya was formed as a separate state and the capital of Assam was shifted from Shillong to Dispur near Guwahati. Tribals and other marginalized communities who were displaced from the plains as Guwahati expanded and developed as well as poor migrants (tribals and non-tribals, through intra-state, inter-state and cross-border migration) who came to the city in search of livelihood and better opportunities progressively settled in the hills. Successive governments accepted the presence of many of these settlers and provided some of them with approach roads, electricity and even water connections. A large section of them have been regularly paying tax to the municipal authorities (Misra 2011). Many hills in the central areas of the city have seen gentrification although one still finds poorer families in the upper parts of these hills. Most of the poor and low-income families, however, seem to be in the peripheral hills now.

According to one survey in 2011, the GMC area comprises of 16 hills on which a total of 65,894 households reside. Of these, 10,208 households were found to reside on Reserve Forest (RF) land, 40,121 households on other State government land and remaining on *patta* land (AC Nielson 2011).[27] The hill settlements of the poor and low-income families are scattered on the hillsides rather than being congested like the informal settlements in the city's plains. As a result, many of these hill settlements are not recognised as slums by the administration, and due to this, government schemes for slums cannot benefit them. The Guwahati Slum Policy of 2009 identified about 24 hill settlements, having a population of 5,380 households, as slums. Further, acknowledging them as slums would result in the GMC

or the State government granting the residents some right to housing, which can be avoided if they are not listed as slums. With regard to the hill settlements on RF lands, such inhabitation is clearly considered as encroachment and in violation of the Assam Forest Regulation Act.

Table 6: List of Guwahati's hills, population and proportion of households across different lands

No.	Hill Name	Population (No. of households)	Reserve Forest (RF)	Govt. Land (Other than RF Land)	Private patta land owned by others	Private patta land owned by self	Don't Know / Can't Say
1	Jalukbari / Lankeswar	127	0.0	99.2	0.0	0.0	0.8
2	Fatasil	7471	9.8	68.3	14.8	4.8	2.2
3	Gotanagar	2038	41.8	38.2	13.2	6.9	0.0
4	Kharguli	2822	0.0	78.0	14.9	7.1	0.0
5	Nabhagraha	4183	0.0	84.5	8.5	6.9	0.0
6	Noon Mati	7715	0.0	86.9	8.9	4.2	0.0
7	Kamakhya/ Nilachal	4837	0.0	78.3	16.1	5.6	0.0
8	Kalapahar	2233	17.3	73.0	8.1	1.6	0.1
9	Narangi	1365	15.5	84.2	0.1	0.1	0.2
10	Hangrabari	5636	13.0	74.5	8.8	3.2	0.4
11	Sarania	701	8.4	56.8	19.7	13.6	1.6
12	Narakashur	8959	0.0	93.1	1.7	4.5	0.7
13	Sunsali	2173	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
14	Kainadhara Hills	1283	0.0	85.9	11.9	2.2	0.0
15	Khanapara Rf/ Amchang Rf	5996	6.3	92.2	1.0	0.5	0.0
16	Garbhanga	8355	99.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	**65894**	**17.7**	**71.0**	**7.3**	**3.6**	**0.4**

Source: AC Nielsen (2011)

Although a large proportion of households are on hills with State government lands (other than Reserve Forest) (71 per cent as per the AC Nielsen survey) and could be therefore given formal land rights (*patta*), they have not been given this. A very small proportion of households on the hills are living on land for which they have *patta* (3.7 per cent as per the AC Nielsen survey). As discussed earlier, the issue of the government not granting *pattas* is not simply restricted to the hills. However, with the settlement and degradation of the hills in the city affecting the natural ecology, there grew an unacceptability of the hill settlements, particularly those on the Reserve Forest lands. This has led to a series of eviction attempts over the past decade or so. In 2002, for the first time the State Forest Department had organised evictions in the hills on a massive scale in order to comply with the Supreme Court's order to remove encroachments from Reserved Forests. In May 2002, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) directed the State government to ensure that by September 2002 the encroachments not eligible for land rights are evicted (Kumar 2002).

In June 2011, the government again began evictions in some of the hill settlements. During an eviction drive in the Garchuk area, clashes erupted between the Forest Department personnel and the residents. In the words of a woman who lives in Tarzanpara, one of the settlements on the lower part of the hill, "when the authority approached the hills with elephants for the

purpose of demolition, people were already prepared to drive them out. The residents had information in advance that the demolition drive would be conducted and hence people from the hillsides came down with sticks and stones to scare off the authorities. Only a few houses at the base of the hill in Tarzanpara had been demolished by then. On seeing the mass opposition, the authorities left."[28] Whereas before 2011, the MUS and political parties like the Communist Party had been fighting against the evictions in the hills, in 2011, it was the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) that came to the forefront[29]. In response to the evictions, KMSS organised a protest on June 22, 2011. Thousands of settlers marched to Dispur to demand a stop to the evictions and ask for land *pattas*. The protesters led by KMSS's Akhil Gogoi demanded that an official of the rank of the deputy commissioner receive their memorandum but two hours passed with no response from the administration. Instead, the police carried out a *lathi* charge and fired tear-gas shells to disperse the demonstrators who had turned violent. Many were seriously injured due to police lathi-charge. When this failed, they fired into the air and one police officer is reported to have fired directly into the crowd, killing three persons on the spot, including a nine-year-old boy. Once this happened, the rally turned violent, police officers and their men were beaten up, and several vehicles were burnt or damaged, allegedly by KMSS supporters. Misra (2011) has argued that although the stated reason for the June 2011 evictions was to bring back the ecological balance of the city, the actual reason seemed to be to help some private firms set up multi-storey housing complexes and hotels in these areas.

The mass protests, however, led Assam's Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi to promise that talks would be held with KMSS. Immediately after this incident, a committee was formed, headed by minister and MLA Bhumidhar Barman in order to analyse the situation and make recommendations for the hill settlements. This committee consulted a large number of civil society organisations, activists and Unnayan Samitis to make recommendations to the government. One of the recommendations was to give the special *patta* (that cannot be transferred except by inheritance) for the maximum land area of one katha five lessa (335 sq.m) to residents who had been living since 10 years prior to June 28, 2011. However, the State government framed no policy to pursue the recommendations by the Bhumidhar Barman Committee. It should also be noted that some of the civil society organisations (including KMSS) gave recommendations quite different from those ultimately given by the committee.[30]

Since 2011, large-scale demolitions have not been seen but there have been smaller scale demolitions. For example, in March 2013, the Forest Department with the assistance of the Kamrup (Metro) district administration demolished nearly 38 houses at Gotanagar hills. The officials faced resistance from the hill residents. In a confrontation with police and forest officials, the residents damaged a police vehicle (The Times of India 2013). In the same month another eviction took place in Lalmati area where forest and civil administration officials faced resistance from the residents (News Live 2013).

In October 2013, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi announced that 85,000 families in Guwahati who have been residing on government land for over a decade would each be provided with *patta* for land of one katha five lessa, but asserted that the Reserve Forests would not be allowed to be encroached upon (The Assam Tribune 2013c). As this announcement was not acceptable to the land rights' organisations and activists mobilizing on the issue of the land rights of the hill dwellers, a convention on "Land rights of the local people and an alternative land policy for securing the rights of the local people" was organized by Brihattar Guwahati

Mati Pattan Dabi Committee (BGMPDC) in Guwahati on November 23, 2013. On February 25, 2014, the State government distributed *patta* to 500 families who were living in the plains and announced that others would also be given *patta* in the future. However, the State government declared that it would not give *patta* to hill dwellers and wetland dwellers. KMSS opposed this with a mass protest. Hundreds of protesters were beaten up by the police and KMSS leaders were detained. During this, a hill dweller and KMSS member also immolated himself. The movement to demand land rights, particularly for the hill dwellers, continues.

6.1. Urban Planning, Regulatory Framework and Governance

In order to understand the issue of the evictions in the city's hills, especially the Reserve Forests, it is important to first understand the history and process of Guwahati's urban growth and development. We have discussed this at length in Part I. In the context of this, the specific factors responsible for the exclusions and conflicts around the informal hill settlements include the history of development-induced displacements of tribals and other marginalized groups from the city's plains, the history of enacting and implementing exclusionary land legislations like the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) 1984, large-scale migration (intra-state, inter-state and cross-border) of tribals and other poor and marginalized groups to Guwahati due to its primacy in the region but for whom the government has done little to provide land and shelter in the city (leading them to turn to informal settlements), exclusionary interpretations and implementation of land legislations and policies which has led to denial of land rights to the poor, lack of viable rehabilitation policies, urban and environmental governance of the hills involving different government departments, etc. The history of displacements and the exclusionary LAA as well as high migration into Guwahati and resulting informal settlements have been discussed earlier in Part I. Here, we discuss the other factors.

There are a number of reasons for the denial of *patta* to the urban poor and even many of the middle class, most of which have to do with the manner in which the state authorities have interpreted the 1989 Land Policy and allowed its subversion to benefit not just the poor but even the elites. Since the Land Policy does not define "indigenous," this has been interpreted loosely and while members of many different social groups have been given *patta,* many tribals and other marginalized communities from Assam have been denied these. While the Land Policy gives priority to giving *patta* to the landless, that is, those with no land anywhere; the policy also allows giving *patta* to those without land in the city. In other words, even if an applicant has land elsewhere in Assam but does not have land in Guwahati, they can get *patta* under the policy. As a result, most of those who have got *patta* in Guwahati are not the fully landless, but those with lands elsewhere in Assam, that is, more well-off people, often with money and influence to nudge the state machinery to give them *patta*.[31] The documents required to apply for *patta* are also cumbersome, such as the *kabula* petition, which many organizations have argued should be done away with; they argue that instead *pattas* should be given through spot surveys.[32]

Furthermore, the non-issuance of land rights in the Reserve Forests, most of which are in the hills, is linked quite simply to the fact that these are Reserve Forests where the rights to inhabit and use the land and its resources have been regulated under Assam Forest Regulation Act. All over India, the rights of forest dwellers, especially tribals, were unrecognized until the Central government enacted The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (hereafter referred to as FRA 2006). Under FRA 2006, the "Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers on all forest lands shall have

the right to in situ rehabilitation including alternative lands in cases where the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers have been illegally evicted or displaced from forest land of any description without receiving their legal entitlement or rehabilitation prior to the 13th of December 2005." However, in 2009, the Guwahati High Court ruled that there are no forest dwellers in Assam. This has created a further challenge for addressing the rights of the city's hill dwellers on Reserve Forest lands.

Some initial primary fieldwork in some of the hills of Guwahati also suggests that there have been attempts by the middle class on some of the RF lands to get the land status changed by forest officials. It is not clear whether and how this has been done and whether this involves a process of de-reserving forests. The evictions on the Reserve Forest lands can also be partly traced to the lack of proper governance of the RF lands. There is no clear demarcation between the Reserve Forest land and other State government land despite the Guwahati High Court ordering a number of times that this be done. As a result, people also end up settling on the RF lands and some government departments also provide some services to them.

While land rights are thus being denied and eviction threats remain, there is also no rehabilitation policy in the city or the state. As a result, it is entirely unclear where the hill dwellers would be relocated and how they would be rehabilitated if and when evicted.[33] There is also no plan for addressing ecological concerns in the city, whether or not the hill dwellers are given land rights or evicted.

It is worth noting here that civil society organisations had put forth demands to the Bhumidhar Barman Committee in 2011 that sought different kinds of changes in the planning and regulatory framework. For instance, KMSS demands included that the Forest Rights Act 2006 definition of "other traditional forest dwellers" be used to give rights to the hill dwellers on RF lands in Guwahati. KMSS also demanded that the cut-off date for giving *pattas* should be June 22, 2011. It demanded that BPL (Below Poverty Line) families on wetlands should be rehabilitated with land in other suitable places within Greater Guwahati while the Reserved Forests in Greater Guwahati should be de-reserved and de-notified. The premium for the *patta* should also be reduced to Rs.10,000 per katha to make it affordable for the low-income groups. The Mahanagar Unnayan Samity of Guwahati put forth somewhat different demands. It asked that there should be rehabilitation of those living on the wetlands. For the forest lands, it asked that rehabilitation should be restricted to those with thatched houses and they should be rehabilitated on nearby Revenue lands. It also asked that the cut-off date be taken as 2009, that the premium for the *patta* should be according to economic conditions of the applicant and land should be settled (i.e. *patta* should be given) on the basis of spot survey instead of on the basis of *kabula* petitions.[34]

6.2. Potential Points of Conflict and Research
Several potential points of conflict arise due to existing modes of governance and exclusionary urban planning and regulatory frameworks. Indisputably, the main conflict right now for the hill settlements is around land rights. As discussed above, time and again conflicts and violence have been taking place between the state and the hill dwellers (especially those on RF lands) around eviction and getting land rights. It is evident that these settlements are the result of exclusive legislations, policies and processes of the past. Rather than addressing the situation from this perspective, exclusions and conflicts have been deepened in recent years through the role that the state has played through evictions in the name of ecological concerns, denial of land rights, allocating land to the elites and business class, and failure to act upon land mafias. The role of the state in these matters as well as the

specific conflicts arising out of this between hill dwellers and elites/corporates, and between hill dwellers and land mafias, need to be examined. The role of city-wide organisations (KMSS, BGMPDS, etc) as well as localized organisations in the movement for land rights; the manner in which these movements / organisations have contained and channelled the discontent or otherwise, the impacts of this on the poor and low-income groups, the relationship between various organisations in the movement for land rights and whether these are complimentary or contradictory also need to be studied.

As the hill dwellers, especially on the RF lands, do not have secure land rights, they are not entitled to basic services. As in the other informal settlements of the city, the community has been mobilized to form unnayan samitis in many cases. The samitis play an important role in water and road provision, often drawing upon the community's labour and money, and sometimes drawing upon political patronage of MLAs and municipal councillors. The role of the *samitis* in addressing exclusions and resolving conflicts around land and basic services is another aspect of research. However, conflicts might also arise between the *unnayan samiti* and individual residents when the latter do not get access to the services provided by the *samiti*. It could also be between *unnayan samitis* or between residents as they might be trying to access the same natural and political resources. There are possibilities of different *unnayan samitis* having different political affiliations and that could lead to conflict at some point. There are quite many tenants living in the hills. Their housing condition and access to basic services varies in the hill settlements. Whether conflicts occur between landlords and tenants and how these are resolved also need to be examined.

In all the above potential points of conflict, class, ethnic and religious identity might be important axes along which conflicts over land and basic services could develop. The role that various actors (state authorities, hill residents, *unnayan samitis*, political leaders and political parties, city-wide organisations in the land rights movement and their participants, etc) play in creating or mitigating the ethnic aspect of these conflicts need to be examined. The research would thus examine the drivers of these conflicts, the impacts and experiences of these conflicts, the (direct) violence that these conflicts lead to, the impacts of this violence, the responses to these conflicts and violence, and the interventions to mitigate them.

In some hill settlements, particularly in the central parts of the city, the invading middle-income groups displaced original tribal settlers through purchasing land from the latter. For example, on Narkasur hill in the central part of the city, the original groups who had informally occupied land, the Karbis and Nepalis, were pushed away to inaccessible parts. This ongoing gentrification has not yet resulted in conflicts.

7. Street Vending

Street markets have been an important part of Guwahati's trade and commerce since a century. Today, nearly 30,000 street vendors sell their wares across the city according to the NGO sSTEP. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act, 1971 defines market as "any place where persons assemble for the sale and purchase of articles intended for food or drink or livestock or other merchandise."

According to the Market Branch of the GMC, there are mainly three kinds of markets in Guwahati. First are the rented markets where GMC has built shops and allotted them to shopkeepers from whom it collects rent. In Guwahati, there are 13 rented markets (Table 7). The second type are the lease markets. There are 7 lease markets in the city (Table 7). The third type of market is the informal markets which accommodate all other vendors who

cannot afford the high rents at GMC rental markets or do not get space at lease markets. Furthermore, informal markets are natural phenomena, which emerge with public demand for certain goods in certain areas. It would therefore seem that the 12 rental markets and 7 lease markets do not adequately fulfil the public demands, which is why these informal markets have come up in various parts of the city. There is no official data regarding the number and location of informal markets in the city. Examples are the Ulubari market and the market opposite Guwahati Medical College. Informal vendors, singly or in small groups of 2-3 vendors, can also be found on various street corners in different localities of the city. Furthermore, in both the lease markets and the informal markets, tribal women from nearby villages come to vend – they are the "regular irregulars" since they do not come on a daily basis to sell their wares in the markets.[35]

There are some individual markets that do not come under the three categories mentioned above. There is also one cooperative market in the city. This is the Pioneer Cooperative market in the Anthgaon area which is run by the market's cooperative society. There are informal markets regulated by local *unnyan samitis* or local club like Lakhra and Gharchuk weekly markets. Informal markets have been setup by railways long time back, such as Pand and Maligaon markets.

The informal vendors regularly face harassment from the municipal officials, police and local goons (The Assam Tribune 2012a, 2012b). It is the pavement and roadside vendors, which primarily face harassment because these vendors occupy or spill over onto pavements and roads leading to overcrowding and congestion in the areas. This problem becomes more acute in busy commercial areas, particularly where there are narrow lanes and by-lanes. Vendors often have to pay officials, police and the goons to do their business. Eviction of roadside vendors to clear them off the government and municipal land and from main roads is conducted from time to time. Such operations often temporarily clear the area, but many vendors come back to the same location after a few days (Bhattacharyya 2001). Informal street vendors were displaced from near the Ganeshguri bridge for "security reasons" after the bomb explosions in 2008. Informal street vendors have also been displaced under urban development projects such as flyover and road construction (The Assam Tribune 2010).

Table 7: Guwahati Municipal Corporation's list of Markets

Type of market	Name of market
Rented markets	1. Fancy Bazaar GMC market
	2. T.R.P. Road GMC market
	3. Paltan Bazaar GMC market
	4. Uzan Bazaar market
	5. Fatasil market
	6. Machkhowa
	7. New market
	8. Chandmari Flyover market
	9. Chandmari Colony market
	10. Ganeshguri market
	11. Ulubari market
	12. Dispur Super market
	13. Wholesale Fish market
Lease markets	1. Uzan Bazaar lease market
	2. Beltola weekly bazaar
	3. Beltola evening daily market
	4. Kacharighat market
	5. Fatasil market

	6. Dispur Super market
	7. Goat market at Santipur
Informal markets	(no official data available)

Source: GMC market section, November 2013.

There has been a long-standing battle for street vendors' rights in Guwahati. In October 1996, the Greater Guwahati Hawkers Association filed a petition in the Gauhati High Court (GHC) against eviction. In response, in March 2000, the court directed the State of Assam and GMC to not take any step to evict hawkers, but it also made clear that hawkers should not block the road, should not cause any nuisance on the road and should keep the roads clean. In 2010, the S.S. Road Hawkers Association filed a petition before GHC because they were aggrieved at the failure on the part of the State government in implementing the 2009 National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, coupled with repeated attempts to evict hawkers. The association also pleaded that GHC quash the order of 2010 under which each vendor was asked to pay an exorbitant sum of Rs.600 per month as "Special Scavenging Charges." Final court orders have been postponed due to GMC's asking the court for time to respond. In October 2013, Mr. Pargmoni Kakati filed a petition in GHC for the implementation of the 2009 National Policy on Urban Street Vendors. The GHC listed this petition with that filed by the S.S. Road Hawkers' Association since they were identical in nature. Furthermore, a group of vendors, who were vending in front of the Guwahati Medical College, filed a petition against their eviction by GMC. In response, GHC ordered that while the case is pending the petitioners shall not be evicted from their place of business.

Working on the street vendors' issues since 2005, and more intensely since 2012, the NGO sSTEP has formed some local street vendors' associations in the different markets (such as the Beltola Mahila Xak Pacholi Byabahayi Santha in Beltola market), along with two city-wide membership-based vendor unions: Greater Guwahati Small Vendors Association and Greater Guwahati Women Vegetable Vendors Association. It has also helped in forming the All Assam Street Vendors Association (AASVA). In some markets there are also autonomous vendors' associations, some supported by sSTEP. The efforts to realise street vendors' rights thus continue in the court as well as on the ground through grassroots mobilisation.

7.1. Urban Planning, Regulatory Framework and Governance

There are several legislations and bye-laws applicable to the functioning of the lease markets and informal markets. Lease markets are created by the GMC under the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (Lease of Parking Places and Markets) Bye-Laws, 2009. Under the Bye-Laws, the Commissioner can give annual leases for markets belonging to the GMC to private contractors, with the approval of the Standing Finance Committee or the GMC. Bids are invited from private contractors who would collect daily rent from the vendors and using that money manage the market. The term of the lease is for the financial year for which the lease has been settled. The bidding price is thus revised every year based on type of stalls and increase in number of vendors. The space and management issues are managed by the lessee (known as *thekedar*) in the lease markets. The GMC has a rate list, which specifies the fees that a vendor must pay depending on the wares he/she is selling. The lessee is supposed to collect the fees from the vendors accordingly. These vendors can be said to be semi-formal.

There is no policy or regulatory framework for giving space to informal markets in Guwahati. The GMC collects Rs.20 per day from each informal vendor as "scavenging tax." However, since this tax is meant for the expenses that the GMC incurs to maintain cleanliness, it does not provide any other facilities or even protection against eviction. The space used by street vendors, in strict urban planning sense, is encroachment and in violation of the Master Plan

provisions and development control rules (or the bye-laws). For these infringements, they are liable to be removed. Moreover, there is a legislative framework under which the GMC can evict informal vendors by considering them as "encroachers." Under Section 349 of The Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act, 1971, the Commissioner can order the removal of any premises by serving a notice to the encroacher or owner or occupier. Removal can be ordered for any structure or fixture, which will:

a. Overhang or project into, or in any way encroach upon, and obstruct in any way the safe or convenient passage of the public along any street, or
b. Project into or encroach upon any drain or upon channel in any street so as in any way to interfere with the use or proper working of such drain or channel or to impede the inspection of cleansing thereof.

The GMC's Enforcement Branch headed by the Deputy Commissioner carries out evictions. Since there is no policy or regulatory framework to protect informal street vendors and instead there is a legislation under which they can be considered encroachments to be removed, the municipal administration and police often harass them.

There is also no policy or regulatory framework under which licenses may be given to informal street vendors unless they are food vendors or they have four-wheel handcarts. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation (Regulating the Sale of Articles of Food) Bye-Laws, 1976 states that food vendors should get sanitary licence from the GMC and should follow the sanitary norms specified in the bye-laws. Any person who commits a breach of any of these bye-laws is punishable with fine which may extend to Rs.250 and in the case of continuing breach with fine which may extend to Rs.50 per day. However, obtaining of the licence is a lengthy and time-consuming process and permission to occupy space is seldom granted. Thus, the majority of food vendors operate without a licence (Bhattacharyya 2001). This also creates conditions for harassment of informal street food vendors by the municipal administration and police. *Thelawala* license for 4-wheel handcarts are issued by the GMC at a fee of Rs.50 per year. However, there is conflict between this license and the traffic rules as a result of which they are not allowed to vend on these handcarts at busy locations. Street vending is also in contravention of other legislations: (i) Indian Penal Code, 1860, section 283, (ii) Motor Vehicle Act, 1988, section 201 and (iii) State Police Act (based on Mahadevia and Vyas 2012). Therefore, there is bound to be conflict with the local state, even if the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, 2009, and now the national legislation for the street vendors, the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, were to be implemented in the city.

This national policy and national legislation were framed through an increasing recognition at the national level of the importance of street vendors and their rights to livelihood. The policy, which provides recognition and space for street vendors in the city, has not been adopted in Assam yet. As a result, inadequate urban planning for street vendors also continues in Guwahati. The Master Plan for Guwahati Metropolitan Area 2025 states that in any new development scheme, 1 per cent of the total land shall be reserved / developed for informal sector / vendor markets, which would be available to the urban poor families to conduct their livelihood earning activities (GMDA 2009). However, informal markets are mainly located in already developed and old market areas. The Master Plan does not make any land provision for these old informal markets. These old markets are also "natural markets." The natural markets are the places where a confluence of pedestrian and vehicle movement provides an excellent location to trade. The Street Vendors Act, 2014, defines "natural markets" as "a market where sellers and buyers have traditionally congregated for

the sale and purchase of products or services and has been determined as such by the local authority on the recommendations of the Town Vending Committee." In fact, there is no official data on the numbers and locations of the natural markets and the number of street vendors in them in Guwahati. This is also why adequate urban planning cannot be done for them. Increasingly, urban development projects like construction of flyovers and road widening have been carried out in Guwahati and since these projects are designed, planned and implemented without any consideration of the vendors' livelihoods, many vendors have also been evicted without rehabilitation.

7.2. Potential Points of Conflict and Research

Several potential points of conflict arise due to existing modes of governance and exclusionary urban planning and regulatory frameworks, which do not consider vendors as an integral part of the city economy and urban development. There are many points of conflict in the lease markets. The first includes conflicts between vendors and the lessee. The vendors in these markets who are paying fees to the lessee of the market can be said to be semi-formal. However, it is likely that conflicts might arise between the lessee and the vendors over the allocation of space and collection of fees. There could also be conflict on who could be allowed to vend within the lease market and who would not be allowed to vend, as no one else but the lessee has a right to decide this. It is likely that some of the lessees could be collecting and increasing rents and arbitrarily that could result into a conflict. The conflicts between the lessee and the tribal women vendors might be different from the conflicts between the lessee and male vendors. The lessees are also sometimes collecting rents from those not part of the market but vending in the nearby areas, which is a potential conflict point. The second includes conflicts for vending space between vendors. This includes conflicts between tribal women street vendors and other vendors. How these conflicts unfold are likely to depend on the status of women vendors, especially tribal women vendors, who are more vulnerable than other vendors. The third set of conflicts are due to lack of services and facilities: Most of the lease markets do not provide basic services like water and toilets, or facilities for storage of goods. The conflicts and violence due to this need to be examined. Finally, there would be conflicts and violence faced by vendors due to state agents (such as the police) or local goons.

There are also many points of conflict in the informal markets. The first includes evictions by the state. Since there are no policies or planning and regulatory frameworks that provide space for informal street vendors and protect them from evictions, a number of informal vendors have been evicted as a result of development projects. Evictions also occur in response to complaints made to GMC. An example is the eviction of the informal market in front of the Guwahati Medical College hospital. These evictions lead to conflicts between GMC and street vendors. As mentioned earlier, one group of vendors has approached the Guwahati High Court against the eviction, with the court giving a Stay order. The second points of conflict revolves around the threat of eviction and harassment by state agents. In the absence of protection measures, and presence of legislations that can be used against them, street vendors face constant threat of eviction. As a result, municipal officials and the police (local police and traffic police) harass them and collect bribes in order to spare them from eviction and allow them to vend. The third point of conflicts involves local goons who might be harassing vendors in the informal market. Fourth are the conflicts that may be occurring between vendors over vending space. This includes conflicts between tribal women street vendors and other vendors. The status of women vendors, especially tribal women vendors, is more vulnerable than that of other vendors. Their size of stalls and their earnings are shrinking gradually due to presence of other vendors. One reason for their vulnerability is

also that they come only once or twice a week to sell in these markets and thus are not able to establish and strengthen their claims to their vending space on a daily basis. Finally, there are potential conflicts and violence due to lack of services and facilities. The informal markets do have basic services like water and toilets, or facilities for storage of goods. The conflicts and violence due to this need to be investigated.

Besides these, there are possibilities of conflicts arising on account of increase in land prices in some of the lease markets. There is suggestion of such a conflict even in the Pioneer Cooperative market in Aathgaon. This market was developed on private land through *dakhal*. It was a beel and was encroached upon gradually. It was managed by the market's cooperative society. Several years ago a conflict arose around land use rights. The market management was placed under the District Collector (i.e. Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup metro district) due to this conflict. In April 2014, a court order reverted the management to the market's cooperative society. The details of the conflict still need to be investigated. According to one vendor, the market's cooperative society worked unanimously till some vested interests penetrated it and split it into two groups. Since the functionaries of the society are selected through elections, these became bitter fights. The group that lost challenged the results of the elections in the court. The group that won the elections had an interest in taking advantage of the rising land prices and bringing in commercial development here. Many small retailers in the market, who are there for a long time feared that they would lose out. With the management reverting to the cooperative society, it remains to be seen how the conflict linked to land unfolds.

The research would examine the drivers of these conflicts, the impacts and experiences of these conflicts, the (direct) violence that these conflicts lead to, the impacts of this violence, the responses to these conflicts and violence, and the interventions for mitigating them. Currently, there are two potential interventions for mitigation. First involves the NGO sSTEP which has been mobilising the street vendors for their rights to livelihood and space in the city. It has formed local associations, two city-wide vendor unions and one State-wide vendor union. There are also some autonomous vendor associations. The research would examine the role of associations and this mobilization in mitigating conflicts and violence. a second potential intervention for mitigation might emerge from the PIL filed by one of the street vendor groups in the Guwahati High Court, resulting in the High Court giving a notice to GMC regarding non-implementation of the Street Vendors Policy 2009. GMC was asked to submit an affidavit in the court. The role that this judicial intervention and GMC's response plays in mitigating conflicts and violence needs to be investigated.

8. Women's Safety and Public Transport

According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), crime against women in Assam in 2012 was around 89.54 per cent, which was double the national average of around 41.7 per cent (Vauquline 2001).[36] Vauquline's study of crime against women in Greater Guwahati (2001), based on data collected from different police stations of Greater Guwahati and the City S.P. Office, Guwahati, shows that there has been a steady growth of crimes against women in the city since 1980. The number of incidents increased from 43 in 1980 to 239 in 1998 (Table 8). This is a nearly six-fold increase in the rate of crimes against women in the last 19 years (Ibid). Vauquline (2001) attributes this to urbanisation, socio-cultural degradation as a result of urbanisation, and very low sex ratio in the city (in 1991 the sex ratio was 783 for Guwahati against the sex ratio of 925 for whole of Assam).

Table 8: Incidence committed against women in Guwahati, 1980-98

Year	Kidnapping	Molestation	Rape	Burnt Alive	Dowry death	Atrocities	Murder	Eve Teasing@	Total
1980*	24	13	6	-	-	-	-	-	43
1985*	29	10	13	2	-	2	-	2	58
1990*	84	36	33	-	-	17	1	2	173
1995*	68	60	39	-	-	38	-	-	205
1998*	108	42	36	-	8	38	7	-	239
2001**	64	67	37	-	5	98	-	-	
2010**	322	119	70	-	12	218	-	-	
2011**	306	112	56	-	10	213	-	-	
2012**	326	90	78	-	9	237	-	-	
2013**	432	207	103	-	15	561	-	-	

@ To be called sexual harassment. It seems that the data from 2001 have been included in molestation head.
Source:
* Vauquline (2001)
** From NCRB data

Crime against women takes place in both the private and public spheres. Over the past few years, various incidents of molestation and sexual harassment in public spaces of Guwahati have been reported in the media. Following an incident of molestation of a young woman outside a bar in Guwahati and the widespread media coverage that it led to, North East Network (NEN) decided to conduct a survey on women's safety in 2011. The survey, based on the methodology developed by Jagori, covered 1045 women and girls across 62 areas in 25 of the city's 31 municipal wards. Nearly 70 per cent women reported some form of sexual harassment in public space at least once in past year whereas about 28 per cent reported experiencing such incidents more than 5 times. Sexual harassment was considered to include different types of harassment: verbal (comments, whistling), visual (staring, leering), physical (touching, feeling up), flashing, stalking, and violent physical attack. Incidents of sexual harassment were reported in both crowded and secluded places. Maximum incidents of harassment took place on roadsides, while using public transport, at public transport stops and in marketplaces. The survey examined various factors for feeling unsafe, including poor lighting, lack of proper signage, poor maintenance of public areas, crowded transport, lack of clean and safe public toilets, lack of effective / visible police, men dealing or taking alcohol / drugs, and lack of respect for women from men. From these, the factors that the survey respondents selected as contributing to them feeling unsafe were varied, with no single factor being cited more. The primary responses that women and girls had to this situation was to avoid using certain public places, not using public transport and staying indoors after dark, asking someone to accompany them while going out, maintaining a dress code and carrying items like pepper spray, knife or safety pins to protect themselves. Since the NEN survey did not analyze the spatiality of sexual harassment in Guwahati, it is difficult to tell whether women find public spaces in some areas of the city more safe/unsafe than in other areas, what are the characteristics of these different areas in terms of planning and governance, and whether and to what extent these varying characteristics play a role in creating varying experiences of safety / lack of safety.

One of the important findings of the NEN survey was that women faced a higher incidence of sexual harassment and violence while using or waiting for public transport and on the roadsides. Women's safety and security in relation to accessing and using public transport has therefore been taken as the focus for the research project. Public transport in Guwahati includes several modes of transport. There are over 1,000 private city buses, which run on fixed routes in the city. Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) operates some buses in the city; the number of buses has increased in recent years since the buses acquired under

JNNURM are also operated by ASTC. The number of the ASTC city buses is not ascertained yet. There are also about 1000 shared taxis (called trekkers), which also run on fixed routes.

There are also tempos, which resemble larger autorickshaws and run on a shared basis along fixed routes. These are called tempas and their routes have been numbered, giving a sense of public transit. The private bus operators are represented by associations like Guwahati Transport Association (GTA), Greater Guwahati United Motor Transport Association (GGUMTA), Greater Guwahati Mini Bus Owners' Association (GGMBOA), Greater Guwahati Deluxe Bus Owners Association, through which they negotiate with the government, especially on hiking bus fares. The state thus plays some role in regulating the private bus sector. It is the same with the trekkers and tempos. There are also autorickshaws and the cycle rickshaws that mainly cater to the middle and upper classes. And finally, many women walk to their destination or to a public transport node; the road is thus an important component of the public transport system.

Based on existing research on transport and mobility, we conceptualise women's safety and security in relation to accessing and using public transport as involving three dimensions. First is safety and security in terms of violence against women (VAW). VAW refers to violence that women experience *because they are women*. This includes sexual harassment, eve teasing, stalking, flashing, etc. Second is safety and security in terms of vulnerability to road accidents. Third is safety and security in terms of security of livelihood since lack of mobility or expensive transport can lead to insecure livelihood, especially for poor women.

8.1. Urban Planning and Governance

Gender concerns are not mainstreamed into processes of urban planning and governance in Guwahati – be it during the preparation and implementation of the Master Plan by GMDA, the planning and provision of infrastructure and services by GMC and other government agencies, or municipal budgeting and decision-making. The lack of services or improper implementation of services provision creates further gendered exclusions and conditions conducive to violence against women. Additionally, a number of urban development processes shaping the contemporary city (e.g. conflicts over land, evictions of the poor, commercialisation of land, segmentation along class and other social divides) may be creating unsafe conditions for women in the city. Several of these aspects contribute to creating safety or lack of safety amongst women accessing and using public transport in the city.

8.2. Potential Factors Contributing to Violence

NEN's survey shows that while factors like patriarchy and sexism are certainly responsible for gender violence, there are also factors related to urban planning and governance that create a sense of security or fear amongst women and allow or discourage sexual harassment. In relation to accessing and using public transport, factors such as urban environments with poor lighting, poor public transport, crowded buses and roadsides, secluded bus stops and roadsides, etc, create a sense of fear and insecurity amongst women and are conducive to incidents of sexual harassment and violence. A more detailed list of potential factors contributing to violence include: frequency of transport, overcrowded transport, inadequate transport routes, expensive transport fares, lack of infrastructure (poor street lighting, uneven roads, lack of footpaths) on streets and transport stops, lack of women friendly activities on the streets ("eyes on the street"), lack of police presence, etc. It also includes social and institutional factors such as lack of respect for women, lack of gender sensitivity amongst state institutions responsible for enforcing laws to protect women, high numbers of men dealing or taking alcohol and drugs, etc. Each of the factors related to urban planning and

governance might contribute to particular types of violence against women. For example, crowded public transport might be conducive to certain types of violence and not to other types.

Furthermore, urban planning and governance being city-wide processes, might create pockets of poverty and affluence, segmentation along class and religious lines, different land-use patterns in different pockets of the city, etc. Safety and security of women, and the contributing factors, might also vary in these different pockets. The experience of and response to violence may also be differentiated by the class, ethnic, and religious group that a woman comes from. For instance, upper-class women might be able to resort to a private car to move in an area with poor street lighting if she feels unsafe, whereas this option would not be available to poor women moving in the same area, making her more vulnerable to experiencing certain types of violence. Lastly, indigenous women who come to vend in the city markets come generally by train from the nearby areas. In case their wares are not sold, they stay back. Some of them stay on the railway platform. They also might experience lack of safety while commuting or staying on the platform. All the above factors as well as their impacts on women's safety and women's responses need to be investigated through research.

CONCLUSION

This paper has developed a background understanding of Guwahati, including its land, planning and governance regimes, in order to identify some of the conflicts in the city and the context in which they have emerged and are taking shape. In this concluding note, we summarise the Guwahati context and the conflicts and violence that we have identified as focus areas of research.

Guwahati, a city of almost 1 million population, is the capital of the north-eastern state of Assam and the gateway to North-East India. The city's expansion began mainly from 1972 with the building of Dispur, then located on the outskirts of the city, as Assam's capital. Being a primate city in a region with low economic growth, an agrarian crisis and ecological degradation, and ethnic conflicts and insurgency movements, Guwahati became a magnet for migrants from surrounding regions. While the rate of migration into Guwahati has slowed down in the decade of 2001-11, there are already a large number of intra-state, inter-state and cross-border migrants living in the city and some migration continues. The politics and conflicts around migration in Assam therefore have implications for Guwahati. Since the 1970s, there have been tensions in Assam around the cross-border migration from Bangladesh. This is linked to a long history of migration from that region, beginning in the colonial period when the region was known as East Bengal and continuing after it became East Pakistan and then Bangladesh. This long history of migration has led to conflicts in Assam over identity and resources. In the 1990s, Assam also saw the rise of ethnic movements organized around particular tribal identities, which was linked to the Indian government's neglect of the North-East region and the state's inability / unwillingness to protect the rights of tribal groups as well as address the issue of immigration from Bangladesh. Some of these movements have also seen the rise of militant groups and ethnic violence. All this has led to a strengthening of ethnic identities in Assam, which have intersected with land conflicts in parts of the state. This intersection is also manifesting in Guwahati in the conflicts around the Reserve Forest lands in the city which are predominantly inhabited by tribals and other marginalised communities.

The manner in which the land, planning and governance regimes have excluded various groups in the city has moreover created a context for conflicts. Although the State government has made huge investments in land and infrastructure development for building Dispur and various public institutions, the city has otherwise developed in the absence of a welfare-oriented state. This has led to huge displacements of tribals and other marginalised groups due to the acquisition of their lands for "public purpose" without adequate compensation / rehabilitation. Moreover, in most cases, the displacements have been due to the absence of legal frameworks that recognise Collective Property Resources (CPRs), leading to a total erasure of the claims of these groups on their commons and these lands being considered state property. Displacements of tribals and other marginalised groups from their commons have thus been an integral part of Guwahati's growth and development. Many of the displaced and dispossessed moved into other areas of the city, peripheral areas and into the hills in and around the city. Guwahati, being a primate city of the region, has also witnessed high migration (intra-state, inter-state and even cross-border) and in the absence of any planning for their shelter, many have moved to the hills. These are some of the processes that have led to the most conflictual issue in Guwahati today, which is of the hill settlements, especially on Reserve Forest lands, and the land rights of its hill dwellers, many of whom are tribals and poor and marginalised migrants.

The conversion of commons into state property began during the colonial period with this land then distributed by the state through a process of "settlement" that involved giving leases (*patta*). This was made possible through the enactment of various legislations. This led to a change in the nature of land rights (from customary collective rights to documented individual lease) and also the transfer of land rights from tribals and other marginalised communities to others. These processes have continued in the post-independence period. The State government owns most of the land in Assam, including in Guwahati. Settlement is now given under the Assam Land Policy 1989 in the form of 30-year leases known as *miyadi patta*.

Today, if a person wants to acquire land in Guwahati legally, then either they inherit *miyadi patta* land or they have to buy *miyadi patta* land. This is not affordable to the poor and lower-income groups and even the middle class. In such land market conditions and in the context of the Assam Land Policy 1989 which gives settlement based on the criteria of occupying State government land for a period of 15 years, the only option for many (including those among the middle class) in terms of accessing land and ultimately getting land rights is to informally occupy State government land. The act of informally occupying land is called *dakhal*. Many also buy land from someone who has done *dakhal*. Guwahati has thus grown and developed through widespread processes of *dakhal*. This has created a vibrant informal land and housing market with different classes, and even certain ethnic groups, predominant in certain locations of the city in certain sub-markets. For instance, *dakhal* on the most vulnerable lands – the Railway lands where *miyadi patta* cannot be given, the peripheral hills, Reserve Forest land in the hills and wetlands – are by the most vulnerable groups.

Following the neoliberal turn in India, Guwahati has seen soaring real-estate pressures and further exclusions and conflicts over land. In recent years, the State government has not been giving *miyadi patta* easily and has been subverting the 1989 policy and giving *pattas* mainly to people with money and influence. While the poor, lower classes and middle classes are being denied *patta*, the State government has been allocating land to corporates and for all kinds of public educational institutions. The state has thus been distributing land for accumulation and for making Guwahati a better education hub, but not fulfilling the needs for shelter. Thus, there is an inequity in the manner in which the state has been dealing with different actors and groups seeking land. Moreover, there has been an alienation of lands in tribal belts through de-reservation of the belts as well as *benami* transactions. And finally, there has been increasing land grabbing by land mafias, especially in the city peripheries, with the state not acting on this when it involves powerful actors / groups.

What we find therefore is that tribals and other marginalised communities have been increasingly dispossessed of their commons. While there are legislations and policies to give these groups individual land rights, these are not implemented in their spirit and are subverted to benefit elites. Since most of the city comprised of wetlands, urban development has involved cutting of the hills to fill the wetlands. Its ecological degradation is thus interlinked to its growth and development and the widespread processes of *dakhal*. Even today, wetlands are being allocated by the state to corporates and educational institutions. On the other hand, since a decade, in the name of ecological concerns, the state has been trying to evict vulnerable groups from the hills and wetlands. A land rights movement comprising of the middle classes and the lower classes has therefore emerged in Guwahati.

This paper has outlined the conflicts in Guwahati on account of the land regime and various legislations and policies for the regulation and protection of natural resources, focusing on the informal hill settlements. The absence of a welfare state has also led to a city bereft of basic

services like water supply, sewerage and street-lighting and the concomitant rise of unnayan samitis which play an important role in improvement of infrastructure and services in the city's neighbourhoods through collective self-help and political patronage. This paper has therefore also outlined conflicts on account of lack of public infrastructure and service provision in the informal settlements, again focusing on the hill settlements.

With Guwahati's economy being primarily tertiary-sector based, the majority of employment is in this sector. For the urban lower classes and the poor, employment opportunities are mainly in the informal tertiary sector, which makes them highly vulnerable. One section of this informal employment is in the street vending sector. The paper has outlined conflicts with regard to access to space for street vendors, which are on account of the planning and governance regime in the city. Several potential points of conflict arise due to existing modes of governance and exclusionary urban planning and regulatory frameworks, which do not consider vendors as an integral part of the city economy and urban development. The city has lease markets with bye-laws regulating the functioning of these markets by the lessees. The city also has many informal markets but there is no policy or regulatory framework for providing space for informal markets. The space used by street vendors, in strict urban planning sense, is considered to be encroachment and in violation of the Master Plan provisions and development control rules. There is also a legislative framework under which the GMC can evict informal vendors. GMC has legislative framework for giving licenses to food vendors and those have four-wheel handcarts, but obtaining of the licence is a lengthy and time-consuming process and permission to occupy space is seldom granted. Moreover, there are conflicts between the licenses and the traffic rules. Furthermore, there is no policy or regulatory framework under which other kinds of vendors can get licenses. The national level policy and legislation for street vendors have not yet been adopted in Guwahati and inadequate urban planning for street vendors continues in the city. As a result, vendors face various difficulties and harassment in the markets where they vend. Increasingly, urban development projects like construction of flyovers and road widening have also been carried out in Guwahati and since these projects are designed, planned and implemented without any consideration of the vendors' livelihoods, many vendors have also been evicted without rehabilitation. In this context, this paper has identified various potential points of conflict in the city's lease markets and informal markets for research.

This paper has also outlined the violence faced by women accessing and using public transport for research. While factors like patriarchy and sexism are certainly responsible for gender violence, several factors related to urban planning and governance also create a sense of security or fear amongst women and allow or discourage sexual harassment in a city's public realm. However, gender concerns are not mainstreamed into processes of urban planning and governance in Guwahati – be it during the preparation and implementation of the Master Plan by GMDA, the planning and provision of infrastructure and services by GMC and other government agencies, or municipal budgeting and decision-making. The lack of services or improper implementation of services provision creates further gendered exclusions and conditions conducive to violence against women. In this context, this paper has identified the potential factors related to urban planning and governance that contribute to the security or lack of security that women experience when they access and use public transport in Guwahati.

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Notes

1 Rate of urbanisation in India was highest in 1971-81 decade, which was 3.9 per cent per annum (p.a.), which then declined to 3.2 per cent p.a. in 1981-91 decade, and 2.8 per cent per annum in 1991-2001 and 2001-11 decades.

2 The rate of violent crimes is measured as number of violent crimes per one lakh population. The violent crime rate in Assam was 36.6, higher than the national average of 21.2. Crimes such as murder, attempt to murder, dowry death, kidnapping, dacoity, rape, riots and arson fall into the category of violent crimes. Former director-general of Assam police Nishinath Changkakoti said there had been a rise in violent crimes primarily because of moral degeneration in society. He was quoted as saying that: "many people, mostly youngsters, are taking to crime to earn easy money to meet lifestyle demands. There is a section of youths who aspire to live a luxurious life without doing hard work." He also said there is another section of people who commit crimes for economic gain as their incomes have remained static but the cost of living has increased manifold (Sarma 2012). The rate of crimes against women in Assam was 36.9 (The Times of India 2012).

3 http://guwahaticitypolice.gov.in/crime/crime_trends.php# (accessed on 17.2.2013)

4 We prepared a database of news articles through online searches using a list of keywords prepared by us. The oldest news article was from 2002; the majority were from 2011-2013. Only English language newspapers were covered; this included *The Telegraph*, *The Sentinel*, *The Assam Tribune*, *The Times of India*, *DNA*, *The Economic Times*, and some magazines like *Frontline*.

5 For example, Mrinal Gohain.

6 Kamrup district was bifurcated in 2003 into two districts: Kamrup Rural and Kamrup Metropolitan. Guwahati now lies within Kamrup Metropolitan, which covers an area of 955 sq.km. (compared to Guwahati metropolitan area of 264 sq.km). Srivastava et al (2010) seem to be referring to the old (unbirfucated) Kamrup district.

7 This paragraph from Reyaz, M. (2013) *From Where Have All the Bangladeshis' Come? A Brief History of Muslims in Assam*, Source: http://twocircles.net/2013jan04/where_have_all_%E2%80%98bangaldeshis%E2%80%99_come_brief_hist ory_muslims_assam.html, accessed on December 26, 2015.

8 Reyaz, M. (2013) *From Where Have All the Bangladeshis' Come? A Brief History of Muslims in Assam*, Source: http://twocircles.net/2013jan04/where_have_all_%E2%80%98bangaldeshis%E2%80%99_come_brief_hist ory_muslims_assam.html, accessed on December 26, 2015.

9 http://baharul.blogspot.in/2012/08/ethnic-conflicts-in-assam-understanding.html (accessed on 12.3.2014).

10 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_administrative_divisions_of_India, accessed on December 26, 2015.

11 Saikia, Hiranya (2012) "Ethno-Exclusive Politics Affecting Assam", *The Times of Assam*, September 18, Source: https://www.timesofassam.com/exclusive/ethno-exclusive-politics-affecting-assam/, accessed on December 26, 2015.

12 Fernandes & Bharali (2011: 10) define rehabilitation as involving the rebuilding of "economic resources, cultural systems, social structures and community support mechanisms that the DPs/PAPs lose as a result of alienation of their sustenance. It is a protracted process which begins long before displacement or deprivation and lasts for several years after land loss or physical relocation."

[13] Section IV of Rules under the 1886 Act refers to two kind of lease on urban land. First is short lease which is granted for any period but not exceeding three years. Lessee cannot transfer the right or sell land. Second is periodic lease which is granted for more than three years. In case lease is issued for more than 10 years, the lessee can transfer the lease after this period.

[14] Those with *pucca* houses have to pay 100 per cent of the valuation in the report; those with Assam house type pay 40 per cent of the valuation and SC/ST category pays 25 per cent of the valuation. Discussion with Ashok Kumar Barman, Deputy Secretary, Revenue & DM Department, Government of Assam.

[15] As stated to us by the former president of the Nutannagar Unnayan Samiti, January 2014.

[16] Discussion with Kishore Kalita, Guwahati, November 2013.

[17] The local experts namely Subodh Sharma told us that this land was allotted for tea garden to a British person named Tom Brand. The tea garden activity was discontinued and land was not under any use. The ceiling surplus land beyond the tea garden should have been taken over by the government under ULC Act, which it did not. Even, government could not take over the tea garden land because there was a person who made a deal with Tom Brand. On death of Tom Brand, the person who had made a deal with the former staked legal claim over this tea garden land. While the court case was on, the local land mafia occupied the land and sold it to the people. Recently, high court gave an order that deal was illegal. Thus, the sale deed was nulled and the land is back with the tea estate, which is not under any production.

[18] Chronicle News Service (2014) "State's First Five-star Hotel Radisson Blu Built on Wetlands, Claims KMSS", *Eastern Chronicle*, July 12, source: http://www.easternchronicle.net/index.php?city=2&edition=12072014#, accessed on July 12, 2014.

[19] Based on the data from the GMC.

[20] Evidently, some slums were left out. An NGO Mahanagar Unnayan Samiti (MUS), and NGO, claims that in Guwahati railway colony about 5,000 people were evicted but these households were not added to the list of slums in the city. Then MUS protested and asked GMC to declare those two settlements as slum. Then GMC surveyed those settlements as slum. Later, the list was updated to about 130 slums, as per the memorandum submitted by MUS to GMC.

[21] It should be noted that the survey identified 6 slums out of 90 slums as illegal extensions in Railway quarters. But a study of the landownership of the remaining 84 slums shows that many of these are also on Railway lands.

[22] The composition of Guwahati's hill dwellers (in terms of their relation to displacement from Guwahati's plains and migration from within Assam and other states) remains somewhat unclear with different scholars having different perspectives on this. We paint this picture here based on available literature such as Fernandes et al (2013); interviews with some scholars (Abhijit Sharma, Guwahati, May 2014 and Bhupen Sarmah, Guwahati, May 2014) and our own field-visits in the hills of Garchuk and Lalmati-Beharbari.

[23] In Assam, 1 bigha = 14400 sq.ft (1337.8 sq.m.). 1 bigha comprises of 5 katha. Each katha consists of 20 lecha. Each lecha is 144 sq.ft (13.378 sq.m.).

[24] http://www.guwahatijalboard.gov.in/ (accessed on 15.3.2014).

[25] The GDD financial details are from http://assamassembly.gov.in/urban-development-gdd-2013-14.pdf (accessed on 15.3.2014).

[26] This section is based on a previous study undertaken at the Centre for Urban Equity; see Desai 2012b.

27 According to Borah & Gogoi (2012), hills areas of Guwahati had about 1.7 lakh population in 2001.

28 Fieldvisit to Garchuk, November 2013.

29 Mr. Subodh Sharma of the MUS says: Subodh Sharma said, "before 2011, MUS and CPI (M) had been fighting with a definite planning, putting forward, in conformity with the tenet of sustainable development and social equilibrium. But in the event, owning land became the driving force rather than having a house for the encroachers. The programme of MUS was overshadowed by other militant activities." He said, now driving force has become owning land rather than owning a house. Hence, our work has been overshadowed. KMSS has become more militant by demanding that government should act in a particular way. They are not concerned with the ecological issues."

30 Annexure III (Suggestions offered by the individuals and organisations that were consulted) of the "Minutes of the Hearing conducted by the Committee constituted to look into the problems for settlement of land for people residing for a long time in Kamrup (Metro) District and adjoining Hill areas, held on 17th and 18th September, 2011 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Bhumidhar Barman." (hereafter referred to as Minutes of the Bhumidhar Barman Committee consultations, 2011)

31 Discussion with Shantanu Borthakur, Guwahati, November 2013.

32 Demand made by a few organisations during the consultations held by the Dr. Bhumidhar Barman committee (Minutes of the Bhumidhar Barman Committee consultations, 2011).

33 There have been some national level policies for rehabilitation such as the National Policy on Resettlement and Rehabilitation for Project-Affected Families 2003, followed by the National Policy for Rehabilitation and Resettlement 2007. Some States have rehabilitation policies, however, Assam has never had a policy and still does not. The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, a legislation that regulates land acquisition and lays down rules for granting compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement to the affected persons in India, came into force from January 1, 2014. It replaces the Land Acquisition Act 1894.

34 Minutes of the Bhumidhar Barman Committee consultations, 2011.

35 The term "regular irregulars" was used by Mrinal Gohain to explain the vending patterns of the tribal women vendors. Discussion with Mrinal Gohain, Guwahati, November 2013.

36 Crime against women refers to crimes in which women are victims and also which are directed specially against women. This includes crimes under IPC such as rape, kidnapping and abduction, homicides for dowry, mental and physical torture, molestation, sexual harassment and importation of girls. It also includes social practices such as commission of sati, demand for dowry and trafficking of women for immoral purposes (Vauquline 2001).

Centre for Urban Equity (CUE) advocates a human-centered and equitable urban development paradigm. The activities of CUE are research, policy advocacy, training and capacity building and data documentation and dissemination. The centre is a National Resource Centre of Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation,

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