DECLASSIFIED TOWNS OF INDIA - 1961-91

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ABSTRACT : Even while granting urban status to new centres, the Census organisation has declassified the existing urban centres at every count. The extent of declassification was very high in 1961, because of more rigorous application of the definition of urban centres, but the process continued even later. The present paper makes an attempt to understand spatial pattern of distribution of these towns and probe into the rationale behind their declassification. Earlier study of "new towns" of 1971 showed that many of the new towns recognised by the census do not satisfy the objective census criteria, and hence it is imperative to know whether declassification is inherently related to their original designation as urban centres. It appears that both the processes, viz. recognition of newer towns and declassification of older towns, operate on an ad-hoc basis, and hence the problem.

INTRODUCTION

Urbanisation represents the spatial dimension of the process of economic development and it is a socio-economic outcome of the process of economic development and industrial growth (Census of India, 1981, p.1). India, along with other developing countries, is experiencing rapid urban growth. A major part of this growth is contributed by migration from rural areas to large urban centres; a small part of it comes from the natural increase and change in the status of settlements from rural to urban at the time of every census. While there has been an addition by way of 'new' towns this way, many existing towns have lost their urban status or have been 'declassified' at every census from 1961 to 91. The spatio-temporal impact of the practice was not uniform, however, the maximum effect of declassification was felt in 1961 when as many as 863 towns were declassified as against only 131 in 1971, 110 in 1981 and 91 in 1991. This was due to rigorous application of census criteria for the first time in 1961.

Since the process of declassification and that of designation of new towns are simultaneous, it is necessary to understand whether these two processes are any way related to one another. The study of New Towns of India, 1971, by Rahinj and Phadke (1982) indicated that many of the towns that were given urban status in that year did not satisfy the objective census criteria either fully or partially. More-over, some settlements though continued as towns, showed a decline because of loss of economic vitality (Sita and Phadke, 1980). In the light of these experiences it was felt necessary to have an in-depth study of the characteristics of declassified towns in the census years from 1961 to 1991, particularly, with reference to their satisfaction of the objective census criteria at the time of their enjoying urban status. The present study, therefore, makes an attempt (i) to identify the spatial pattern of distribution of the declassified towns, (ii) to explore into the factors that led to their declassification at every census, and (iii) to examine the general forces which lead to

declassification, if any.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA BASE

To understand the distribution of declassified towns, the same were located on maps and differentiated according to size for the four census years. Since the intention was to understand the extent of satisfaction of the census criteria by these towns when they enjoyed urban status*, their position in the previous census was examined and insets were prepared to show separately the distribution of towns satisfying different census criteria either singly or in combination. Tables were also prepared statewise to understand the quantative aspects. This analysis enabled elimination of certain towns where declassification could be easily explained. Other towns were analysed further in terms of detailed occupational structure to understand their functional specialisation in earlier census. The data base used for the exercise was the Indian census.
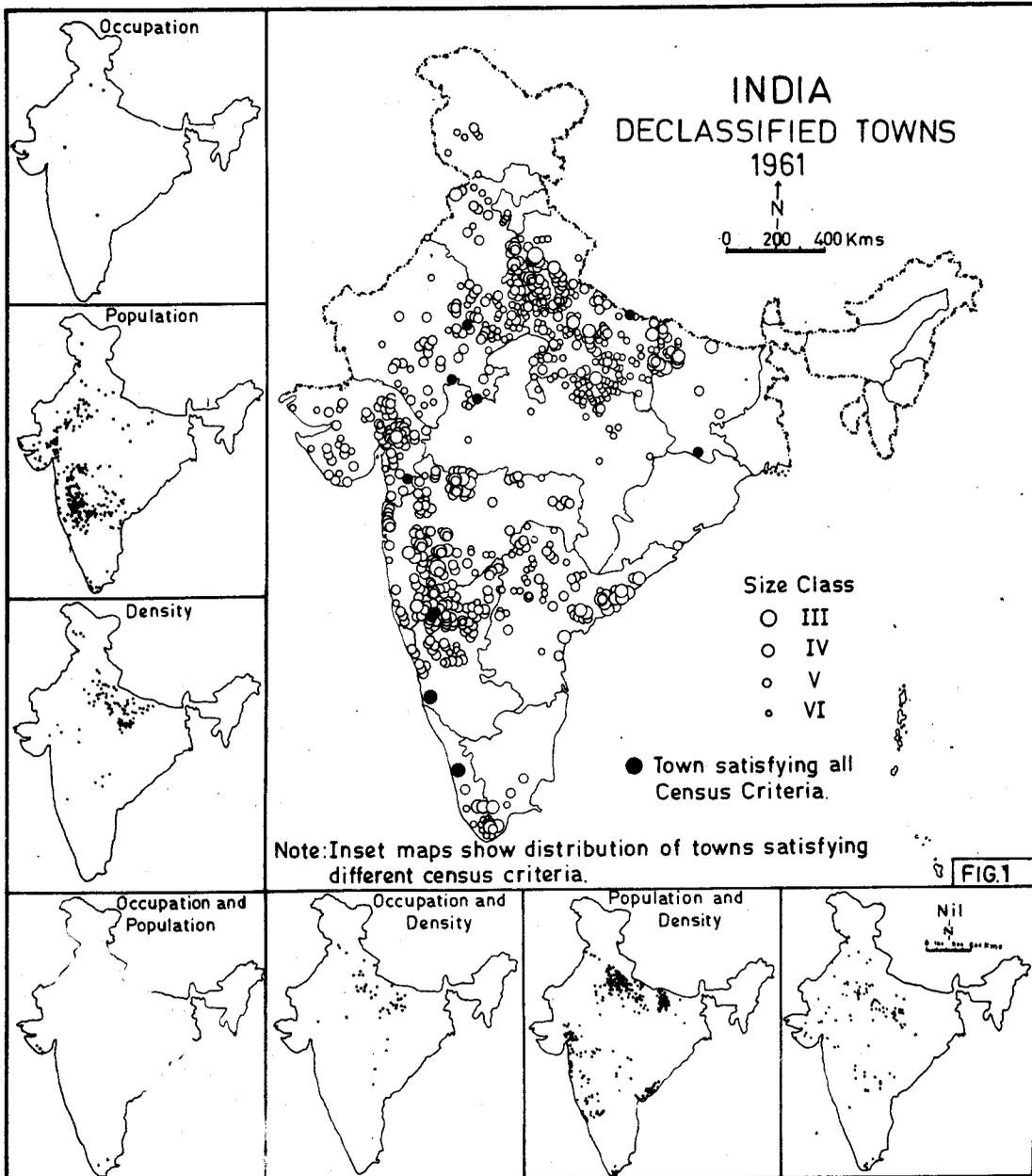
SPATIAL PATTERN OF DECLASSIFIED TOWNS

The pattern of distribution of declassified towns in 1961 reveals their uneven spatial spread (Fig.1). In fact, there are areas such as lower Ganga Plains, the Brahmaputra valley and the adjoining hills of the northeast, Central hills, Rajasthan desert, coastal and interior parts of Orissa, the Kavery and Pennar valleys in Tamil Nadu, southern maidan of Karnataka, northern coast of Kerala and hilly areas of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh in the north that are almost devoid of declassified towns. Some of these areas are physically defective being either hilly, too dry or cold and thus have lower density of population and urban centres in general; hence absence of declassified towns is easily explicable. However, other areas such as West Bengal and parts of Tamil Nadu

and Kerala do not stand to this test, and probably, the criteria of 'urban' have not been rigorously applied in these states. Alternatively, the earlier designation of the towns itself was cautious.

Of the areas affected by declassification, Middle Ganga Plains, areas on both sides of the Western Ghats in Maharashtra and adjoining parts of Karnataka as well as the mainland of Gujarat are the most striking for the number and extensiveness. In the Ganga plains, there are two major concentrations, one in the Ganga-Yamuna doab in the West and other in the Gomati-Ghagra doab in the east. There is a small cluster in the centre around Varanasi. Elsewhere, there is greater effect in the south compared to that in the north. In the Deccan, a major congregation is around the upper Krishna valley which extends southward to Tungabhadra valley and northward to upper Bhima; Khandesh forms an outlier. The cluster in Gujarat is along the lower Sabarmati valley. Small but significant aggregations are also found in southern parts of Malabar coast and Krishna-Godavari deltas in Andhra Pradesh. Besides these, Mewad region of Rajasthan, Punjab plains and adjoining parts of Jammu and Kashmir, central Saurashtra and Marathwada-Telangana form areas of low concentration of declassified towns.

Most of the areas affected by declassification are predominantly agricultural and hence have higher density of population. The settlements here have attained urban status due to their size and density in earlier census (Fig.1, insets). However, a large number of towns in the Middle Ganga Plains satisfy the occupational criterion in combination with density and hence cannot be explained in terms of population density and agricultural prosperity alone. It was probably a fallout of completion of the process of reorganisation of states on linguistic basis where a number

INDIA
DECLASSIFIED TOWNS
1961

N

0   200   400 Kms

Occupation

Population

Density

Size Class

O   III
O   IV
o   V
o   VI

● Town satisfying all
Census Criteria.

Note: Inset maps show distribution of towns satisfying
different census criteria.

FIG.1

Occupation and
Population

Occupation and
Density

Population and
Density

Nil

N

of towns in princely states lost their significance in the new set up. This is surmised from the pattern of distribution of princely states, vis-a-vis the distribution of declassified towns (Census of India, 1973 p. 17-23).

In Mewad region of Rajasthan, its northward extension into Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, as also in Marathwada and Telangana in the south, the size of centres and their density suggest that there is no pressure of population in these areas. In fact, it is a common knowledge that they are not densely settled. Most of the towns in western parts of Deccan, mainland of Gujarat, central Saurashtra and Krishna-Godavari delta were, however, recognised on account of their size and or density.

Distribution of declassified towns, when compared to that of towns in general, shows a spatial correlation with distribution of small towns in the earlier census period i.e. 1951 (Census of India, 1973, p.61). West Bengal and Tamil Nadu are exceptions and need further probing to explain the absence of declassified towns in them.

The areas suffering from declassification in 1971 (Fig.2) are mainly restricted to the south in the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The belts of Saurashtra and Kashmir valley continue to suffer. However, the states of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan which were the worst victims in 1961 stand out by absence of declassified towns. Declassification has also considerably declined in the mainland of Gujarat. The causes of declassification in areas such as Krishna-Godavari delta, Telangana, Saurashtra and Kashmir valley are similar to those for 1961. In southwestern parts of Andhra Pradesh, processes are similar to those in Telangana while declassified towns of Tamil Nadu follow pattern similar to Krishna-Godavari delta, being located either in agriculturally prosperous coastal belt in the east or the plantation belt in the west.
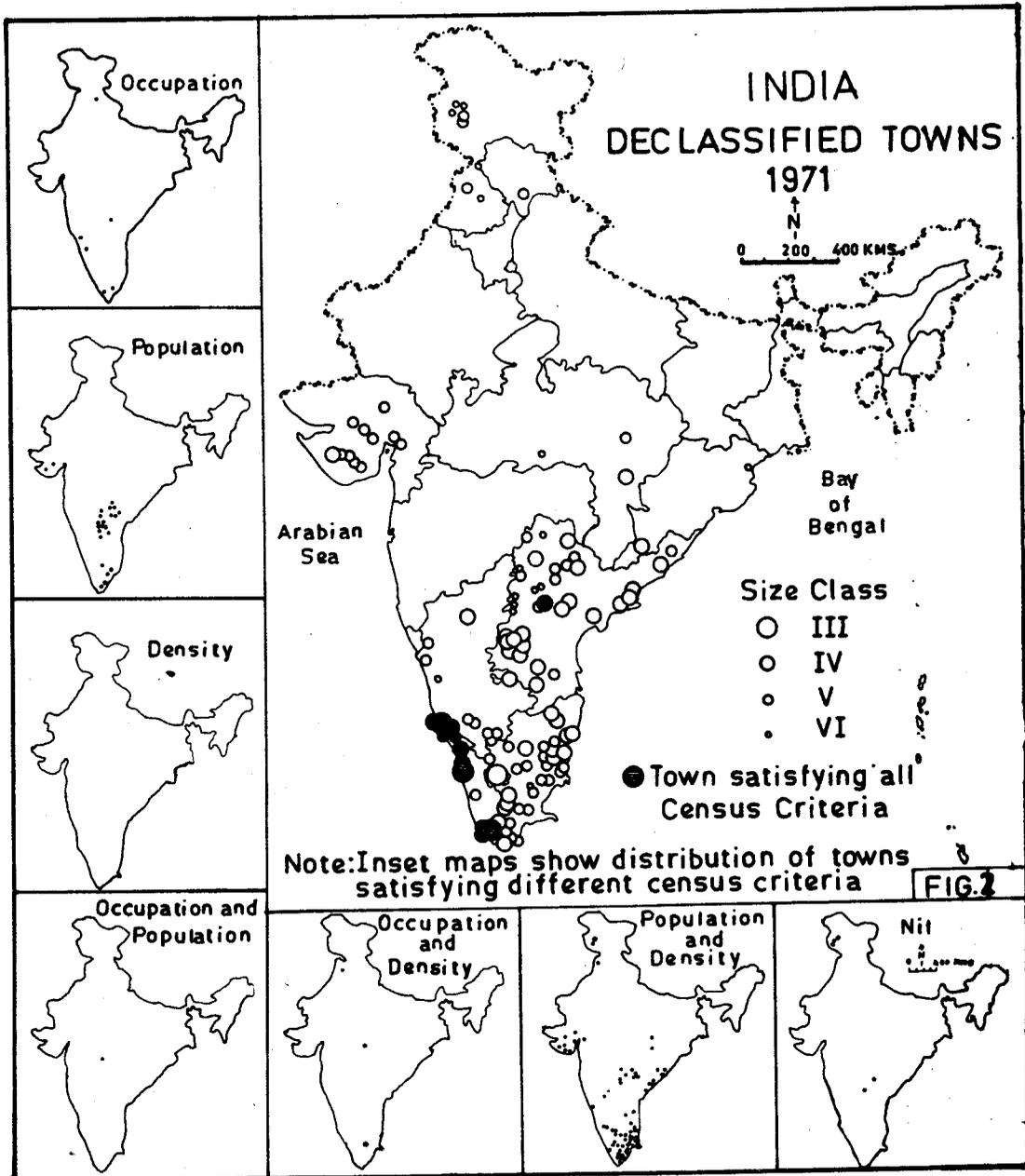
Surprisingly, most of the towns suffering declassification along the Malabar coast satisfy all the census criteria. It is necessary to investigate the factors that have led to their declassification; some of those are significantly large.

The distribution of declassified towns in 1981 (Fig.3) shows heavy concentration along the Malabar coast which extends northward into Karnataka coast and eastward into the Tamil Nadu hills. While western Maharashtra shows a smaller but sizeable cluster, elsewhere the occurence is scattered. As in the earlier census, some of the towns of the Malabar coast continue to suffer despite their satisfaction of all the census criteria; in the other areas, the explanation for the previous decade holds good. There is only one town in Bihar and Maharashtra each which has been declassified despite the satisfaction of occupational criterion.

The distributional pattern in 1991 (Fig.4) reveals two major concentrations; one in the central part of the Deccan and the other in the northwest. A small cluster is located in the hill areas of the northeast. These areas have escaped declassification in earlier censuses viz. 1971 and 1981. Some of those towns, especially in the Deccan, are large and quite a few of them such as Daund satisfy all the objective census criteria. Most of these towns were given urban status in the preceding census on account of population and density either alone or in combination (Fig.4 Inset). Occupational criterion is also satisfied by a sizeable number of towns. One wonders about the rationale behind their declassification.

From the foregoing analysis it is clear that the intensity of declassification varies in time and space. It shows an overall decline although

INDIA
DECLASSIFIED TOWNS
1971

0   200   400 KMS.

Arabian
Sea

Bay
of
Bengal

Size Class

○ III
o IV
° V
. VI

● Town satisfying all
Census Criteria

Note: Inset maps show distribution of towns
satisfying different census criteria

FIG.2

Occupation

Population

Density

Occupation and
Population

Occupation
and
Density

Population
and
Density

Nil

Kerala coast has suffered declassification almost prepetually and that too with increased intensity; this is also the case, to some extent, with eastern parts of Tamil Nadu. The current census year is an exception to this rule. The major factor for declassification in 1961 seems to be the rigorous application of census criteria; however, the application does not show objectivity and hence the states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu which escaped declassification in 1961 have become prominent in the later period. In 1991, however, there is no large scale declassification in these states, as probably most of the towns not deserving urban status have already been eliminated.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF DECLASSIFIED TOWNS

In analysing towns this way the towns which were merged with nearby city or in the adjoining villages on completion of development project or those ruined by natural hazards like flood were omitted. Besides, for some towns data were not available and hence could not be studied further. The remaining towns alone were examined in greater details.

Declassified towns, grouped on the basis of their size, reveal maximum concentration in class V for all the census years except 1991 where the number is marginally higher in class VI (Table 1). In 1961, towns of class VI come next in importance, suggesting declassification mainly of small towns. In 1971 and 1981, however, declassification has affected large towns as well. There is no significant difference among the states. However, for Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh the towns declassified in 1961 mostly belong to class VI, while in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu larger towns have suffered declassification. In 1971, Tamil Nadu and Kerala stand out for declassification of larger towns; the latter continues to show the same characteristics in 1981 as

well. In 1991 Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra show declassification of large towns.

The declassified towns, when analysed on the basis of the extent of satisfaction of the census criteria (Table 2a-d) bring out that most of them satisfy the criteria of size and or density. Less than 10% of the declassified towns in 1961 satisfy the occupational criterion either alone or in combination. This percentage, however, improves to 20 in 1971 and 27 in 1981. Moreover, there are some towns which satisfy all the three census criteria.

Declassification of towns not satisfying occupational criterion is understandable, but that of towns satisfying this criterion and particularly of those fulfilling all the three criteria is rather difficult to understand. It was, therefore, thought essential to examine in detail the occupational structure of such towns.

Detailed analysis of the towns satisfying occupational criterion, grouped on the basis of male workers in non-agricultural activities (Table 3a-d), reveals that a greater majority of such towns in 1961 have workers predominently in the class of non-cultivating owners of land and commerce; in the later census years, the towns show specialisation in relatively less important non-agricultural activities like mining, quarrying and livestock rearing. Only a minority stands out in manufacturing, particularly in 1961 and 1971, and other services, especially in 1961. No detailed study of the characteristics of declassified towns in 1991 could be carried out because of the aggregation in 1981 Census. The only thing that can be said is that such towns specialize in non-agricultural activities which is quite explicable.

CONCLUSION

The practice of declassification of towns

INDIA
DECLASSIFIED TOWNS
1981

N
0   200   400 KMS

Arabian
Sea

Bay
of
Bengal

Size Class
○   III
○   IV
○   V
•   VI
●   Town satisfying all
       Census Criteria

Note: Inset maps show distribution of towns
        satisfying different census criteria.   FIG.3.

Occupation

Population

Density

Occupation and
Population

Occupation
and
Density

Population
and
Density

Nil
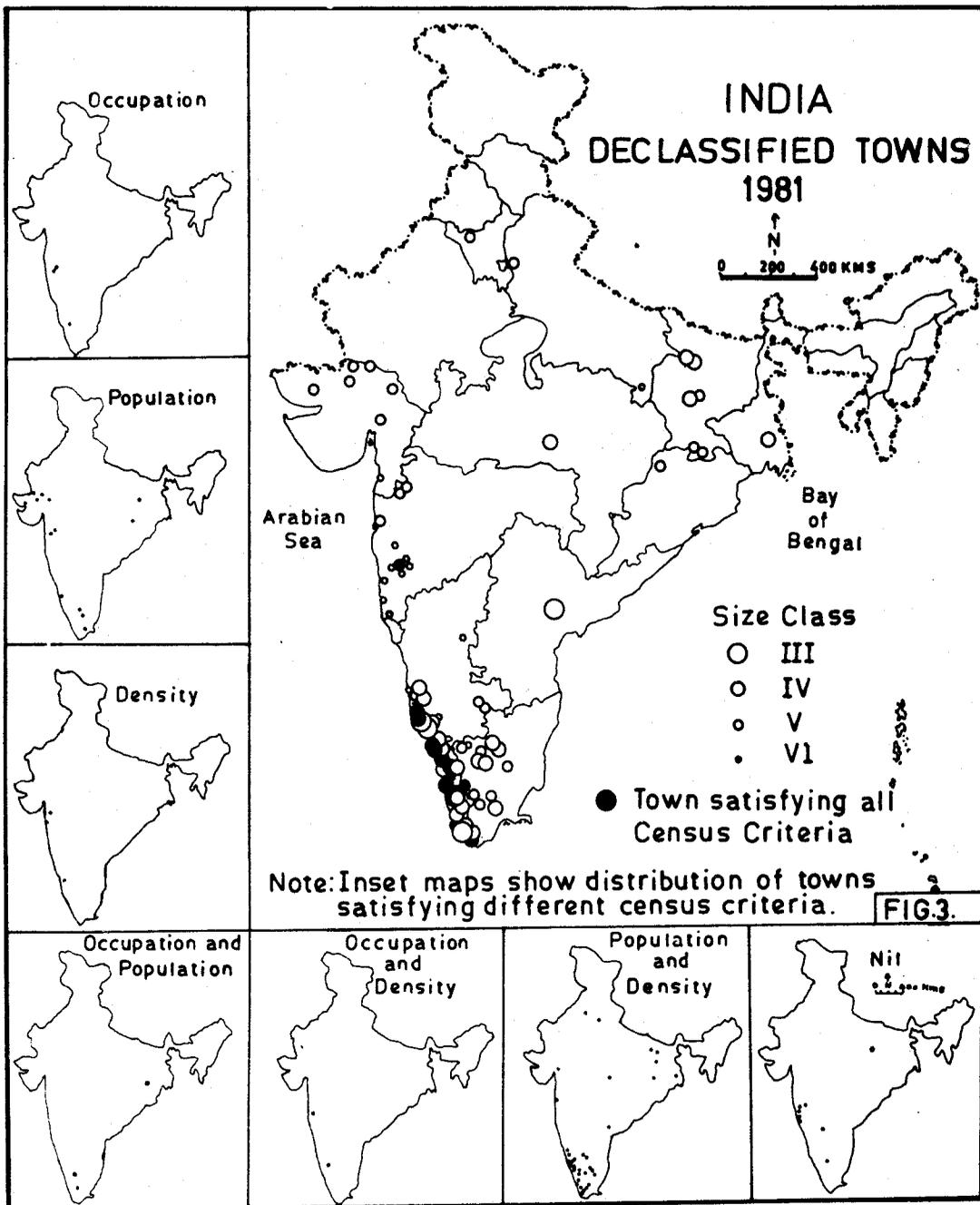
TABLE 1: SIZE OF DECLASSIFIED TOWNS

	1961				1971			
	III	IV	V	VI	III	IV	V	VI
Andhra Pradesh	-	14	33	17	-	19	15	3
Bihar	-	1	3	1	-	-	-	-
Gujarat	-	6	54	14	-	1	10	-
Haryana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Himachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jammu & Kashmir	-	-	1	5	-	-	2	3
Kerala	1	2	5	-	5	6	3	1
Karnataka	-	-	63	4	-	1	6	2
Madhya Pradesh	-	-	3	45	-	1	1	1
Maharashtra	1	22	90	9	-	-	-	-
Manipur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orissa	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Punjab	-	1	6	8	-	-	1	2
Rajasthan	-	-	44	38	-	-	-	-
Tamil Nadu	-	5	6	3	1	15	21	2
Uttar Pradesh	1	19	103	99	-	-	-	-
West Bengal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	3	70	411	243	6	44	59	16

	1981				1991			
	III	IV	V	VI	III	IV	V	VI
Andhra Pradesh	1	-	-	-	2	4	5	2
Bihar	-	3	3	-	-	-	-	2
Gujarat	-	-	6	1	-	-	-	-
Haryana	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-
Himachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jammu & Kashmir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kerala	8	15	3	-	1	-	-	-
Karnataka	-	3	2	3	-	10	7	2
Madhya Pradesh	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Maharashtra	-	-	4	-	2	-	1	8
Manipur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Orissa	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Punjab	-	-	-	-	-	1	12	8
Rajasthan	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
Tamil Nadu	-	5	6	2	-	-	1	2
Uttar Pradesh	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	3
West Bengal	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
	9	27	28	15	5	19	32	35

TABLE 2 : EXTENT OF SATISFACTION OF CENSUS
CRITERIA BY DECLASSIFIED TOWNS

(a) 1961

State	Nil	Size	Density	Occupation	1+2	1+3	2+3	1+2+3	Total
Andhra Pradesh	10	22	4	1	25	1	1	-	64
Bihar	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	1	5
Gujarat	9	29	i	1	29	1	3	1	74
Jammu & Kashmir	1	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	6
Kerala	-	4	-	-	-	-	2	2	8
Madhya Pradesh	25	1	15	-	2	5	-	-	48
Madras	4	4	-	-	6	-	-	-	14
Maharashtra	7	86	1	-	28	-	-	-	122
Mysore	2	41	-	-	20	1	-	3	67
Punjab	3	3	-	2	4	3	-	-	15
Rajasthan	25	33	8	1	10	2	-	3	82
Uttar Pradesh	13	9	52	1	114	30	-	2	222
India	99	233	87	6	239	44	6	12	727

(b) 1971

State	Nil	Size	Density	Occupation	1+2	1+3	2+3	1+2+3	Total
Andhra Pradesh	2	16	-	1	16	-	-	2	37
Gujarat	-	2	-	-	9	-	-	-	11
Himachal Pradesh	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Jammu & Kashmir	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	5
Kerala	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	13	15
Madhya Pradesh	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	3
Mysore	-	-	-	2	7	-	-	-	9
Orissa	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
Punjab	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	3
Tamil Nadu	-	5	-	1	32	-	1	-	39
India	5	23	-	6	71	-	5	15	125

(c) 1981

State	Nil	Size	Den-sity	Occu-pation	1+2	1+3	2+3	1+2+3	Total
Andhra Pradesh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Bihar	-	1	-	-	4	1	-	1	5
Gujarat	-	5	1	-	1	-	-	-	7
Haryana	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Kerala	-	-	-	-	13	-	-	13	26
Madhya Pradesh	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Maharashtra	5	2	-	2	1	-	1	1	12
Mysore	1	1	1	-	4	-	1	-	8
Orissa	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Tamil Nadu	1	4	-	-	6	2	-	-	13
Uttar Pradesh	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
West Bengal	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
India	8	14	2	2	34	3	2	14	79

(d) 1991

State	Nil	Size	Den-sity	Occu-pation	1+2	1+3	2+3	1+2+3	Total
Andhra Pradesh	-	-	-	-	10	-	2	1	13
Bihar	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Haryana	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Karnataka	-	-	1	-	15	-	1	2	19
Kerala	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Madhya Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Maharashtra	4	1	-	1	-	-	3	2	11
Manipur	1	-	3	-	1	-	2	-	7
Orissa	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Punjab	-	-	8	-	13	-	-	-	21
Rajasthan	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Tamil Nadu	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	3
Uttar Pradesh	1	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	5
West Bengal	-	-	.2	-	-	-	-	1	3
India	6	2	17	1	45	-	11	9	91

TABLE 3: OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALISATION OF MALE WORKERS IN DECLASSIFIED TOWNS SATISFYING OCCUPATIONAL CRITERION (THE FIGURES REPRESENT NUMBER OF TOWNS)

1961

Location quotient	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
	Non-cultivating owners of land; agricultural rent receivers and their dependents	Production Other than cultivation	Comm-erce	Trans-port	Other services and miscell-aneous sources
1 to 1.5	3	6	5	-	5
1.5 to 2	2	4	5	-	4
2 and above	13	-	4	4	1
Total :	18	10	14	4	10

1971

Location quotient	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
	Mining, Quarrying etc.	Manu-factur-ing	Constr-uction	Trade and Comm-erce	Transport storage & Communi-cation	Other services
1 to 1.5	-	1	-	-	-	3
1.5 to 2	-	2	-	-	-	1
2 and above	10	3	3	-	-	1
Total :	10	6	3	-	-	5

1981

Location quotient	III	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
	Livestock rearing, fishing etc.	Mining, Quarry ing	Manu-factur-ing	Constr-uction	Trade and Comm-erce	Transport storage & Communi-cation	Other services
1 to 1.5	1	1	-	-	1	-	1
1.5 to 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 and above	12	1	-	3	-	-	-
Total :	13	2	-	3	1	-	1

1991

Location quotient	Va	III, IV, Vb, VI to IX
	Household Industry	Other non-agricultural categories
1 to 1.5	3	1
1.5 to 2	1	-
2 and above	4	19
Total :	8	20

shows wide variations in time and space between 1961 and 1991. While a large number of towns have been declassified in 1961, the initial year of rigorous application of the census criteria, there is a progressive decrease in the number of such towns. While a majority of declassified towns in 1961 were small, in the later census years declassification has also affected large towns. Spatio-temporally, the process shows variations and hence regions affected in one year remain unaffected in later census years, while those which escape the process in earlier year suffer heavily in later years reflecting on ad-hocism and lack of objectivity in the proce-

dure. This is also supported by the fact that a number of towns, particularly in Kerala, satisfy all the census criteria and yet stand declassified. Increase in the proportion of declassified towns satisfying even the occupational criterion either alone or in combination is a sign of rigor in the application of census criteria. However, it has been rather over-stretched in declassiying some of the larger towns satisfying all the census criteria. This is in contradiction with liberal designation of new towns as revealed by the study of such towns for 1971 census.

Most of the towns that satisfy occupational criterion have male workers specialising in

INDIA
DECLASSIFIED TOWNS
1991

Occupation

Population

Density

Arabian
Sea

Bay
of
Bengal

Size Class
○   III
○   IV
○   V
·   VI

● Town satisfying all
  Census Criteria

Note:Inset maps show distribution of towns
     satisfying different census criteria.

FIG.4.

Occupation and
Population

Occupation
and
Density

Population
and
Density

Nil
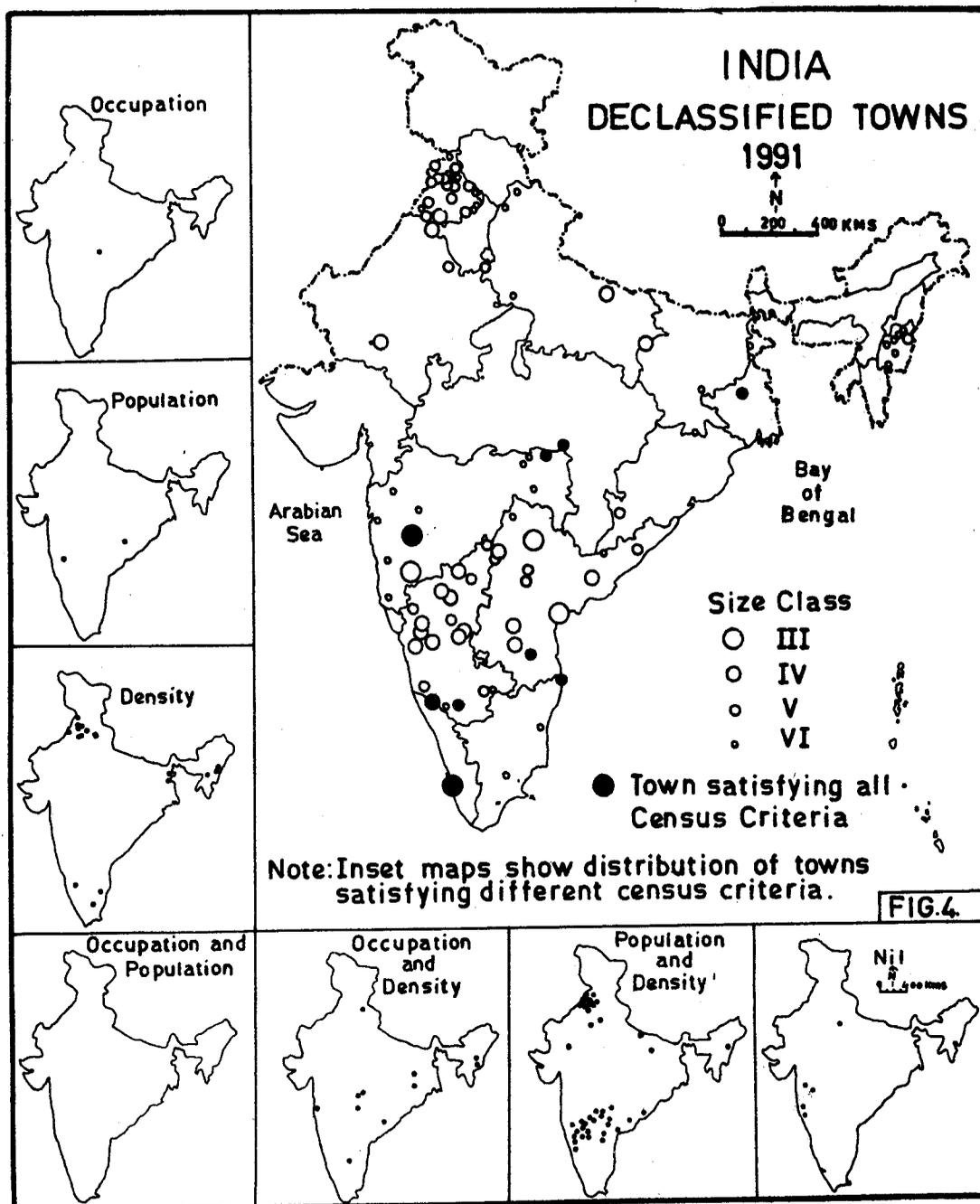
less important non-agricultural activities and very few of them specialise in manufacturing or services. This brings out a lacuna in the definition of 'urban' where activities like livestock rearing, quarrying are placed along with manufacturing. Commercial farming, on the other hand, does not find similar status.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study of declassified towns points out that declassification in a particular census year is very closely connected to designation of urban status to settlements in earlier census years. While this was understandable before 1961, when objective criteria were not laid down, the process of designation of new towns has remained liberal even in the later census periods. This causes a change in status from rural to urban in earlier census and again to rural in later census. Moreover, both classification and declassification operate on ad-hoc basis and show spatio-temporal variation in their impact. If such policies continue it would cause great difficulties in the study of the temporal aspects of urbanisation, particularly with respect to small towns and hence it is highly desirable that the Census of India take steps to bring in objectivity in both classification and declassification of towns. The suggestions made by Rahinj and Phadke (1982) are worth considering.

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