Secondary Towns, Jobs and Poverty Reduction:
Refocusing the Urbanization Agenda

A Conference Organized by

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And

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CALL FOR PAPERS

It is now accepted that urbanization is (i) a defining feature of development, (ii) proceeding at a very rapid pace, and (iii) central to poverty reduction strategies. But the urbanization discourse tends to take place at an aggregative level, with the overall national rate of urbanization taking center stage, both as an outcome to be explained, and as a causal variable explaining growth, inequality and poverty. This obscures key analytical features of the urbanization landscape, and often narrows the policy debate simply to the issues relating to large cities. However, there is a growing recognition that the distinction between secondary towns and large cities is a central one for analysis and for policy.

Our central tenet is that the composition of urbanization is at least as important as its aggregate rate, for growth and for distribution. In particular, we wish to explore the key role of secondary towns, urban agglomerations far smaller than the usually focused upon large cities, megacities, or capital cities. What exactly is meant by a secondary town or a small town? How do they differ across a range of socio-economic indicators and in access to public services? How important are these smaller entities in explaining the rate of urbanization, economic growth and poverty reduction? What determines migration to secondary towns compared to large cities? What is the growth potential of secondary towns relative to large cities? How different are their distributional characteristics? Does growth in secondary towns create more jobs, especially for the bottom forty percent of the income distribution, compared to the growth of large cities? How should governments decide on the allocation of public investment across different sized urban agglomerations? What are effective policies to promote secondary town development? What can be learned from the history of urbanization in developed countries with regard to these questions? These are the sorts of questions which motivate this conference.

The conference organizers invite submissions of completed papers or substantial abstracts (5-7 pages) on the broad topic of Secondary Towns, Jobs and Poverty Reduction. The submissions can be theoretical, empirical, or policy oriented. The empirical and policy analysis can be multi-country, or country specific, and historical on countries from any part of the world.
Submissions should be sent to sk145@cornell.edu by December 1, 2015. Decisions will be communicated by January 15, 2016. Final papers are due by May 1, 2016. The conference will meet the travel and accommodation costs of one presenter per accepted paper, subject to the guidelines of the organizing institutions.