

WEST BENGAL GEO-SPATIAL ISSUES



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In Between Rural and Urban: Challenges for Governance of Non-recognized Urban Territories in West Bengal

Gopa Samanta

Introduction

The census 2011 has come out with some data sets on urban West Bengal, the fourth most populous state in India, which together put a big challenge before the State Government in the context of managing 'non-recognized' urban territories. The term 'non-recognized' is being used to mean the territories which have been declared as 'urban' by the Census of India but have not been declared as 'statutory urban' (Urban Local Bodies, shortly called ULBs) by the State. The list of such census towns are increasing in number at a very fast rate in West Bengal (Table 1). At present West Bengal has 780 census towns which is the highest among all states in India (second highest is 461 in Kerala and third highest is 376 in Tamil Nadu as per 2011 census), whereas the number of statutory towns is only 127. The growth rate of census towns is also very high as out of this 780 census towns, 528 has been added only in the last decade. In 2001, the number of census town was 252 out of which only four got recognized as the ULB in the entire decade, which indicates an extremely slow process of municipalisation (recognizing a census town as statutory town or ULB) in West Bengal. Thus the slow process of municipalisation and under-reporting of actual urban territorial dimension (discussed later) together contribute to the low level of recognized urbanization in West Bengal. As a consequence, most of the census towns especially which are experiencing fast economic growth in the form of development activities such as industries, mining and commercial enterprises, and are also having a higher level of in-migration of population either from immediate rural hinterland (in case of market town) or from outside areas (in case of industrial town), represent urban places where the efficient government mechanism is non-existent. The census towns in West Bengal are under the governance of Gram Panchayats (the lowest level of rural government in India) but the actual built up areas are often extended in different Panchayats thus making the governance as well as provision of infrastructures and services more problematic. Before we discuss the specific cases of governance problem faced by the census towns we need to understand the pattern of urbanization and the process of municipalisation in West Bengal.

The paper explains the pattern of urbanization and also the process of urban recognition (making statutory towns) in West Bengal on the line of argument made by Denis, Mukhopadhyay and Zerah (2012) which they explain as 'subaltern urbanization' trend in India. By the word 'subaltern urbanization' they refer to the pattern of

'Autonomous growth of settlement agglomerations (which may or may not be denoted as urban by the census of India) that are generated by market and historical forces, which are not a. "dependent" on large traditionally important settlements or b. planned cities or c. industrial townships' (p 52).

The paper focuses on the spatial pattern of urbanization in West Bengal which is changing in this century to a large extent and is being more diversified in character to become independent of metropolitan dominance. The overall pattern of urbanization in twentieth century was very much concentrated in and around Kolkata and Durgapur-Asansol urban-industrial agglomerations of the state. This pattern has started to be altered from the beginning of this century with new urban growth coming up in areas away from metropolitan dominance, which can be defined as 'subaltern' in nature.

The paper builds the arguments around a set of hypothesis - first, the spatial pattern of urbanization in West Bengal is being independent of metropolis; second, the process of urban recognition by the state

is extremely slow; third, there is high degree of invisibility of the actual urban situation in the state due to the technical problem of identifying the settlement as urban by the census; and fourth, the non-recognized urban territories are posing challenges to the existing governance mechanism under state which is not capable of handling the situation. The paper is based on both quantitative and qualitative methods, and uses secondary data from census of India as well as primary data from the field work.

Patterns of Urbanization in West Bengal

West Bengal, located in the eastern part of the country, is a densely populated state with a population of around 91 million out of which around 29 million lives in urban areas. The percentage of urban population in West Bengal reached 31.89% in 2011. The state also has the highest urban population density i.e. 6,789 Persons / Sq. Km. The process of urbanization in West Bengal in the twentieth century was more oriented towards large cities and existing urban-industrial regions. The available literature on the broad pattern on urbanization (see Guchhait 2005) and the city size distribution (Sarkar 1995, 2012; Mitra 2010 etc.) in the twentieth century West Bengal supports the view of metropolitan and big city dominance. The Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA) accounted for 64 to 58 percent of state's urban population in between 1971 and 2001 respectively (Table 1). However, this trend has started to change in the twenty-first century which is already visible in the 2011 census data.

Table 1: Urban population, Urban growth rate, Number of census towns and Number of statutory towns in West Bengal, 1951 - 2011

Year	Percentage of urban population	Percentage growth of urban population	Number of census towns	Number of statutory towns	Percentage of Urban Population in KMA area
1951	23.90				
1961	24.40	35.97			
1971	24.70	28.41	48		64.11
1981	26.50	31.73	89		63.64
1991	27.48	29.49	148		58.92
2001	28.03	20.20	252	126	58.88
2011	31.89	-	780	127	48.44

Source: ILGUS, 2002 and 2011 census

The new trends are not only visible in case of development of new census towns which is enormous in size but also in the district level spatial pattern of urbanization. The proportion of state's urban population in KMA area has sharply declined from 58.88 per cent in 2001 to 48.44 per cent in 2011, which proves the decreasing metropolitan dominance in the pattern of urbanization in West Bengal. The growth of small and medium towns started to be more pronounced by the end of the last century which was also visible in 2001 census (Figure 1) and the percentage of urban population in class I towns decreased from 81.7% in 1991 to 75% in 2001. Moreover, if we look at the district level growth in the percentage of urban population between 2001 and 2011, the maximum growth has taken place in

the districts outside existing metropolitan areas. In the first decade of this century the highest level of increase (above 6%) in urban population has been experienced by districts such as Jalpaiguri, Darjiling,

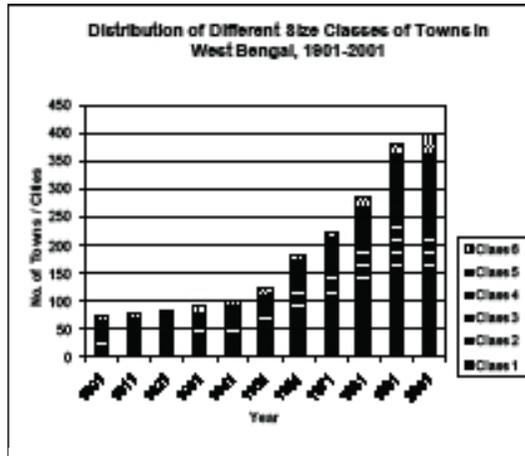


Figure - 1

years. In terms of per capita state domestic product (SDP), West Bengal declined from first in 1960 to ninth among Indian states at the end of the millennium. The share of state in the total industrial production of the country has been reduced from 24% in 1947 to 11.9% in late 70s and to 4.6% at present. In terms of Human Development, the state's position is also not very promising as it ranks 10th among 17 major states of India (Khasnobis 2008). Chaudhuri et al. (2012) has also demonstrated that West Bengal did not perform well in the last two decades due to the sharp fall in the growth of both primary and secondary sectors. The bad financial condition of the State, which is not capable of taking the additional financial responsibility for development and maintenance of new ULBs, may be one of the main factors for slow process of municipalisation in West Bengal. Moreover, the financial crisis of the State is not only impacting the formation of new ULBs but also the levels of basic service provision in the existing ULBs (Samanta, 2010).

Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, Haora and South 24 parganas districts (Table 2 and Figure 2), Most of these districts except Haora and South 24 parganas, are located outside Kolkata Metropolitan Area, which indicates that the pattern of urbanization in West Bengal is taking a character, independent of Metropolis and existing urban-industrial region.

The high rate of increase in urban population in West Bengal (Table 1) is not compatible with the growth of cities' economy and as a result among the total urban population of the state, about 30% belongs to Below Poverty Level and the 40% live in slums (Mitra and Mukherjee 2008). In spite of long political stability, the state has not performed well in the economic front during the last 30

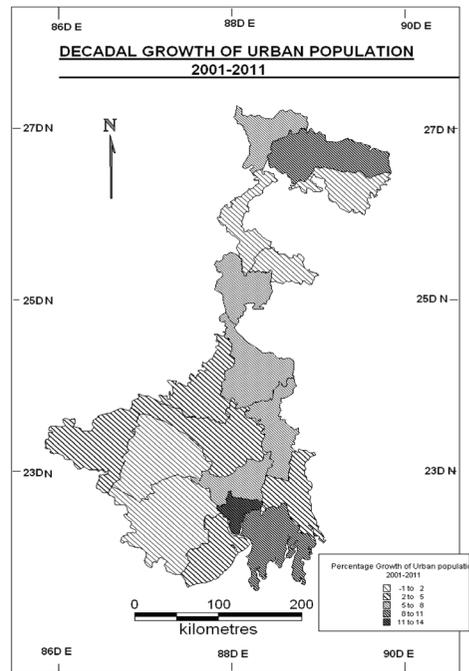


Figure-2

Table 2: District-wise levels of urbanization in West Bengal in 2001 and 2011 and their respective growth

State/ District	% of Urban population to total population (2001)	% of Urban population to total population (2011)	Growth/ Difference
West Bengal	27.97	31.89	3.92
Darjiling	32.34	38.99	6.65
Jalpaiguri	17.84	27.00	9.16
Koch Bihar	9.1	10.25	1.15
Uttar Dinajpur	12.06	12.07	0.01
DakshinDinajpur	13.1	14.13	1.03
Malda	7.32	13.80	6.48
Murshidabad	12.49	19.78	7.29
Birbhum	8.57	12.80	4.23
Barddhaman	36.94	39.87	2.93
Nadia	21.27	27.81	6.54
N. 24 Parganas	54.3	57.03	2.73
Hugli	33.47	38.62	5.15
Bankura	7.37	8.36	0.99
Purulia	10.07	12.75	2.68
Haora	50.36	63.30	12.94
Kolkata	100	100	0
S. 24 Parganas	15.73	25.61	9.88
PaschimMedinipur	11.9	12.03	0.13
Purba Medinipur	8.29	11.65	3.36

Source: Census of India as Calculated by Saha 2012

The Process of Constitution of ULBs/ Municipalities in West Bengal

Presently West Bengal has 127 ULBs including 6 Municipal Corporation, 118 Municipalities and 3 Notified Area Authorities. In addition, there is one IT township called Nabadiganta Industrial Township located in the periphery of Kolkata metropolis. The Criteria for being Municipality according to the West Bengal Municipal Act is (Section-3) is as follows:

- Population Size of 30,000 (This figure varies from state to state. As for example the size for Andhra Pradesh is 40,000, for Maharashtra is 25,000 and for Karnataka is 20,000)
- A density of 750 per Sq. Km.
- Non-agricultural Population of 50% or more of the adult population.

Among these three criteria the first two are easily calculated from the secondary sources such as census but the calculation of the third depends on the local level sources such as Gram Panchayat and Block Development Offices as there is no secondary source for data on adult population. The data on this third criterion must be authenticated by the respective BDO before the application goes to the DM. According to the Model Municipal Law, Govt of India, the population size is 25,000; density is not specifically given; and non-agricultural population must be 85% or above. This model has been modified by the different states as the ULBs are under the direct purview of State Government.

The state of West Bengal is famous for its decentralized governance process even before the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment bills passed in India in 1993 and 1994. Decentralized process is also practiced in the formation of ULBs in West Bengal. Here, the demand for transforming a settlement from rural to statutory urban comes from below. The local level Gram Panchayat in consultation with the local community puts the request to local Block Development Office. The respective Block Development Office then verifies the eligibility criteria as mentioned in the West Bengal Municipal Act 1993, Section 3. If the concerned settlement satisfies all the three threshold criteria then Block Development Officer (BDO) forward the application to the District Magistrate (DM) of the respective district. Once DM receives the application from the respective BDO, he/she may consult BDO on the eligibility criteria of the census town for becoming statutory urban. After this confirmation of the threshold conditions, DM sends the application to the Department of Municipal Affairs, Govt. of West Bengal. The Minister-in-charge of Municipal Affairs Department (MAD) discusses the proposal with other cabinet ministers and if they agree to make the settlement urban, the ministry of MA sends the proposal to the Finance Department to do a cost-benefit analysis. If Finance Department passes the proposal, then it goes to the Law Department for the notification on the changing status of the settlement from rural to urban following the guidelines of section 4, West Bengal Municipal Act 1993. Hence the notification should wait for three months for the objection to come if any from the inhabitants of the respective areas coming under the notified ULB. On the expiry of this tenure of three months, the Government declares the town as statutory town in the form of either Municipality or Notified Area Authority.

Although from the above procedure it seems that the process of making statutory town is very democratic and decentralized, experience shows that the state level political-economy plays a big role in this decision. In practice, the process of making ULB is a political decision as the Government takes the final decision which is often influenced by the party and powerful persons in the Ministry. The decisions sometimes do not come from below rather it is decided at the ministerial level first, which mobilize the local political power to take the process on board. Constituting ULB and its maintenance expenditure come under State exchequer, the consideration of which sometimes influences the State Government's decision as it puts additional financial responsibility to the government. As the financial position of the State of West Bengal was not good in the last decade (khasnobis, 2008; Chaudhuri et al. 2012), there is a chance that this consideration has influenced the decision of municipalisation with making only four municipalities out of 252 census towns. The slow process of municipalisation can also be explained with the decentralised process itself. The demand for making statutory town should come from the lo-

cal community which is sometimes difficult to come in reality. As soon as the town comes under ULB status, all rules and regulations becomes strict and taxes become higher for the local people which they might not opt for. Although we do not have the field data from many census towns in West Bengal, the household level survey in two census towns i.e. Barjora and Singur shows that business people do not opine for making those settlements ULBs but service sector people opine for the statutory town status. The reason behind this, as explained by the research participants, lies in the nature of demand from both the sections of society – service sector people demands better services which can only be possible with ULB's fund structure and business people and industrial houses do not want to take more financial responsibilities in the form of different municipal taxes which they do not need to pay now. Therefore, defining community and organizing their demand for statutory town are critical barriers in the process of municipalisation as local community does not represent a single group of people having common preferences and demands.

The Levels of Non-recognized Urban Territories in West Bengal

As mentioned earlier, 'non-recognized' urban territory is a term which is being used in this paper to define census towns, the settlements which have become urban but yet to be recognized by the state as the statutory urban. Pradhan (2012) defines such kind of urbanization and the consequent growth under the category of census towns as 'unacknowledged urbanization'. Denis, Mukhopadhyay and Zerah (2012) opine that keeping census towns without making them statutory urban by the State is a case of 'denied urbanization'. Although there are differences in the names given to these settlements, there is a wide consensus among scholars on the level of new urban growth in India (30% of the total growth) which is mostly under these categories of urban settlements. West Bengal has the maximum number of census towns (780) followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. Out of this 780 census towns 528 (contributing 57.9% share of urban population in CTs) has been re-classified from villages and these re-classified settlements forming new census towns in 2011 contributes to 66% of urban growth in West Bengal (Pradhan 2012).

Table 3: District-wise number of Census Towns and ULBs in West Bengal, 2011

Districts	Number of CTs	Number of ULBs
Darjiling	24	5
Jalpaiguri	34	4
Koch Bihar	12	6
Uttar Dinajpur	5	4
DakshinDinajpur	5	2
Malda	27	2
Murshidabad	65	7
Birbhum	14	6
Barddhaman	86	11
Nadia	55	10
N. 24 Parganas	78	28
Hugli	64	13

Bankura	9	3
Purulia	25	3
Haora	135	3
Kolkata	0	1
S. 24 Parganas	111	6
PaschimMedinipur	11	8
PurbaMedinipur	20	5
Total	780	127

Source: Census of India, calculated by the author

If we look at the district level spatial pattern of the census towns in West Bengal, it gives us a clear pattern of new urban growth outside existing class-I and metropolitan cities. Although two districts having highest number of census towns (Haora and S. 24 Parganas) are located near Kolkata Metropolitan but many other districts with very large number of census towns such as Murshidabad, Nadia, Jalpaiguri, Malda etc. are located far away from the existing urban agglomerations (Table 3). Out of 780 census towns in West Bengal only 195 (25%) are located in the urban agglomeration of the size of more than one lakh and above. Around 75% of new census towns have come up in the districts with dominant agricultural economy and far away from the existing urban-industrial regions. Chakraborty and Dasgupta (2011) predicted the same trend by analyzing the regional level data on urban situations between 1981 and 2001 in their study on regional variations in the urban growth pattern of west Bengal. The factor responsible for new urban growth in these districts may be attributed to the agricultural surplus and consequent movement of investment from farm sector to commercial based tertiary sector in small town category. Some studies (Roy, 2012; Banerjee, 2012) have proved this connection in their research on growth of small and medium towns in West Bengal such as Malda and some other small towns around Siliguri. According to Chaudhuri et al (2012) although there was a downfall in the primary and secondary sector growth of West Bengal in the last decade, its tertiary sector grew at a very fast rate of 9 to 11% which also might lead to this higher level of new urbanization in the form of small market and service centres and consequent growth of non-recognized urban territories in West Bengal.

The Case for Singur and Barjora

Invisibility of Actual Urban Dimension

Singur is located in Singur Rural Development Block of Hooghly district in West Bengal. It is 35 km away from the state capital and metropolitan city of Kolkata. Singur was first declared as census town in 1981 and is continuing that status till now. The locational advantages i.e. connectivity by both railways and expressway to the Kolkata metropolitan region and location in the middle of a very rich agricultural region, have played a major role in the fast growth of Singur as an important market and business centre. Basically it serves the role of a service centre connecting the agricultural hinterland with the nearest urban industrial agglomeration i.e. Kolkata Metropolitan Area.

‘Singur’ received a huge media and academic attention at both national and international scale in between July 2006 (The notification for land acquisition of Tata Nano Factory) and October 2008 (The declaration of Tata Industries to relocate their plant to Gujarat). In Economic and Political Weekly alone, nine articles were written on Singur on this issue (see Chandra 2008, Bandyopadhyay 2008, Roy 2008 etc.). However, no dialogue was ever made either in media or in academic discussion on why Singur is kept as census town for three decades without recognizing this as a statutory urban centre. The provi-

sion of infrastructures and services under the ministry of Urban Development and Municipal Affairs Department could change the situation for Singur facilitating the development of wholesale business and small scale industries in this already developed market centre.

Now if we try to understand the process of not recognizing Singur as an urban centre by the state which Denis, Mukhopadhyay and Zerah (2012) define as a case of 'Denied Urbanization', we need a fresh look into the minimum threshold requirement for being an ULB in West Bengal following West Bengal Municipal Act, 1993 (Datta 2002). The act (Section 3) has three-fold criteria for making a settlement urban – population size of 30,000; density of 750 persons per sq. km and 50% of adult population in non-agricultural occupation. Singur census town qualifies both the second and the third criteria whereas it does not fulfill the first criterion of 30,000 population (Table 4). Here is the problem with census counting, which is always against each and every individual settlement unit and therefore fails to give us the population information against settlement agglomeration of census towns thus leading to underreporting of actual urban population. Singur has become census town in 1981 occupying the area under Singur-1 Gram Panchayat (GP) and since then up to 2011 the census continues to give the data against the same area. However, in these three decades the spatial development of Singur is no more limited to the Singur-I GP and has extended over 8 villages covering entire Singur-II GP and Part of Balarambati GP. If the population of these areas (the continuous built up area, which can be defined as Singur Agglomeration) are taken together it gives a figure of 52,411 as back as in the year 2001 which is more than that of other small towns such as Tarakeswar and Memari. Thus underreporting of actual urban is facilitating 'denied urbanization' to continue in West Bengal. This denied urbanization also puts challenges to the rural Gram Panchayats who are not capable of managing the diverse activities especially mining and industrial activities taking place in the census towns.

Table 4: Population size, Density of population and Percentage of non-agricultural workforce in Singur Census Town (S. CT) and Singur Agglomeration (S. AG), 1981-2001.

Year	Population		Population Density per sq. km		Percentage of Non-agricultural workers	
	(S. CT)	(S. AG)	(S. CT)	(S. AG)	(S. CT)	(S. AG)
1981	13,189	38,844	2,061	1,702	69.83	56.46
1991	17,176	46,971	2,684	2,058	76.88	63.91
2001	19,537	52,411	3,053	2,297	91.16	80.04
2011	23,762	NA	3,713	NA	NA	NA

Source: Mondal, 2012

Similar is the story of Barjora, a census town in Bankura district. It became census town in 2001 and still now continues with the same status. The story of Barjora is similar to that of Singur as it is not only a case of non-recognized urban scenario in the state, it is also a case of underreported urban situation. The census town of Barjora is representing the population of only one gram panchayat i.e. Barjora in the census whereas the actual urban spread is covering 12 villages located in 5 gram panchayats of the area surrounding Barjora giving the entire stretch a shape of settlement agglomeration (these are the agglomerations of settlements with continuous built-up area either around a census town or an overgrown village). Barjora town is agglomerating with Monohar, Barapukhuria, Baguli, Jaysinghapur,

Kadasol, Ghutgarya, Dejuri, Birsinhapur, Ronalejora, Basudebpur (Uttar), Hatasuria and Sahebdihi vil-
lages. According to Denis and Marius-Gnanou(2011), such settlement agglomerations with more than
10,000 population in each unit can be considered as urban areas in India following the universal urban
model of Geopolis definition. The following table explains the gap between actual urban expansion
(Barjora Agglomeration) and reported urban (Barjora Census Town) in this place.

**Table 5: Population size, Density of population and Percentage of non-agricul-
tural workforce in Barjora Census Town (B. C T) and Barjora Agglom-
eration (B. AG), 1981-2001.**

Year	Population		Population Density		Percentage of non-agri- cultural workers	
	B. CT	B. AG	B. CT	B. AG	B. CT	B. AG
1991	9554	24002	1318	748	74.01	55.54
2001	11512	27814	1588	867	87.10	70.37

Source: Show, 2012

Moreover, the census updates data on existing census towns in each census year without changing
their physical boundaries to include the actual physical growth (settlement agglomeration) over other
villages around that census town which leads to the invisibility of actual urban situation. For example,
in 2011 a new census town named Ghutgorya has come up in the Barjora agglomeration keeping Bar-
jora and Ghutgorya as two census towns which are actually parts of the same settlement agglomeration
in reality. These kinds of technical problem of census counting increase the level of non-recognized ur-
ban territories in West Bengal as these individual census towns do not qualify the minimum threshold
population for becoming statutory urban i.e. 30,000.

New Economy

One of the important criteria for a settlement to become statutory urban in India is the higher percent-
age (three-fourth or more) of non-agricultural workforce. If we look at the percentage of main workers
in non-agricultural sector of Singur and Barjora census towns, these were more than 91% and 87%
respectively in 2001, which have increased to a much higher level by now. Even the settlement ag-
glomeration for Singur and Barjora, these percentages were more than 80% and 70% (Table 4 and 5).
Therefore, the economy of these census towns as well as of their agglomerations cannot be defined as
rural in nature.

These census towns are characterized by the flourishing urban economies somewhere under tertiary
sector and others in industrial and mining sectors. Being located in a rich agricultural hinterland of
Hugli district, Singur has developed its base as market town with a range of retail and wholesale busi-
ness activities in this place. At present there are around 1,158 retail shops and 245 wholesale business
enterprises for potato in Singur. Singur is also flourishing for its high level of accessibility with Kolkata
metropolitan region facilitating the commuters to settle in this place where services are relatively better
than their villages located in the surrounding areas. There are seven bank branches located in this place
where the savings and credit amount in each branch varies between 50 to 200 crores and 10 to 50 crores
respectively. This simple volume of monetary transaction gives us some idea on the level of business
transactions taking place in this area.

Barjora on the other hand is connected to the global urban economy with the development of indus-

tries from multinational companies and mining activities under public-private partnership. The rapid growth of industrial and mining economy in Barjora since the year 2000 has changed the physical landscape of the entire region. The urban phenomena are not only limited to Barjora census town but also have been expanded to a larger area covering surrounding villages in every direction. The rapid expansion of the town started 2004 onwards. The pattern of development is more like ribbon type as most of the new economic activities are being developed along the roads connecting the place with Durgapur, Bankura and Durlavpur link road to Raniganj in three different directions. The entire stretch of the area having urban-industrial development includes twelve villages along with Barjora CT.

Barjora has 13 large scale industries and 30 small scale industries in the region. Two big private coal mining companies (Trans-Damodar and Emta) are operating in the region under the private public partnership with West Bengal Mineral Development and Trading Corporation, and Damodar Valley Corporation (public partners) respectively. These huge scales of mining activities are associated with displacement and rehabilitation programmes under which around two-three villages are already relocated to rehabilitation colonies in Barjora. The land value has increased 20 to 50 times within a period of five-six years. Speculation of land and accumulation of land in few hands have become common practices in the region. Industrial activities are creating huge level of air pollution and water crisis thus posing serious problems to agricultural economy and household water supply in the region. At present there are 5 banks operating in the region, the average amounts of deposit and credit of those branches are around 20 and 3 crores respectively. Taking all these aspects together, it is easier to understand the level of development happening in these small places called census towns. The dimension of development in these places is difficult to control by the local rural government run by Gram Panchayats.

From Rural to Urban

The above discussion made the argument clear that in West Bengal there is a high gap between the actual and the recognized level of urbanization. The total urban population living in 127 ULBs and 780 census towns is lower than actual urban population and the level of non-recognized urban territories is increasing at a faster rate as a consequence of slow process of municipalisation as well as invisibility of territorial urban expansion. Now the question arises - why this recognition for statutory urban territory i.e. ULB is important for a settlement. On the basis of analyzing both the census and the field level data, this argument can be built on three grounds: first, the level of overall development accelerates with the increasing level of urbanization; second, urban administrative set-up i.e. ULBs are more equipped to provide basic infrastructure and services to the settlements; and third, the haphazard growth of built up area can be checked with the municipal building rules.

Overall Development and Urbanization

The 2011 census data of the districts of West Bengal clearly indicates that there is a relationship between the level of urbanization and the level of people's socio-economic condition, access to water and sanitation, and the housing condition. These three indicators together can be considered as the measure of the overall development and well-being of the people. Each of these indicators has been developed at the district level from a set of individual variables. The access to water and sanitation has been calculated from four variables - availability of drinking water within premise, households with available drainage, households with bathroom, and latrine facility available within premise. Similarly, the housing condition has been calculated from four variables - houses having three rooms and above, house-wall made of burnt brick, household with concrete roof, and Kitchen available in houses. The third parameter i.e. socio-economic condition of the household has been calculated from seven variables including households having television, households having computer, household having telephone, households availing bank services, households using LPG for cooking, households having electricity, and household having scooter, moped, and motorcycle.

The district level picture of all these three indicators shows that the districts having higher level of urbanization are experiencing better status in access to water and sanitation, housing condition, and household level socio-economic condition. The districts having good status in all these indicators are Darjiling, Barddhaman, Hugli, Haora, Kolkata and North 24 Parganas (Table 6) and these are districts which are highly urbanized and have a long experience of urbanization. In contrast the districts (such as Bankura, Puruliya, Kochbihar, Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, Birbhum, Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur etc.) with a very poor level of urbanization have low status in each of these indicators. This statistical analysis indicates that probably urbanization has a role to develop the overall socio-economic condition and well-being of the people.

Table 6: District level Access to water and sanitation, Housing condition, Socio-economic condition and the Level of urbanization in West Bengal, 2011

Districts	Composite scores of access to water and sanitation	Composite scores of housing condition	Composite scores of socio-economic condition	Levels of Urbanization (% of Urban population to total)
Darjiling	1.56	4.14	8.73	38.99
Jalpaiguri	0.80	-0.42	-1.13	27.00
Koch Bihar	1.23	-0.98	-3.91	10.25
Uttar Dinajpur	-0.88	-1.64	-4.42	12.07
DakshinDinajpur	-0.53	-3.23	-2.53	14.13
Malda	-2.35	-1.43	-3.49	13.80
Murshidabad	-0.91	-1.46	-3.64	19.78
Birbhum	-1.37	-2.68	-0.63	12.80
Barddhaman	1.48	0.60	7.06	39.87
Nadia	2.32	0.45	-0.01	27.81
N. 24 Parganas	1.88	2.93	8.61	57.03
Hugli	2.08	1.77	8.26	38.62
Bankura	-2.82	-1.64	0.17	8.36
Purulia	-2.24	-2.96	0.35	12.75
Haora	1.31	2.92	8.27	63.30
Kolkata	6.52	6.76	20.52	100
S. 24 Parganas	-1.65	-0.83	0.03	25.61
PaschimMedinipur	-2.40	-1.95	1.12	12.03
PurbaMedinipur	-0.99	-0.95	-1.31	11.65

Source: Census on India, calculated by Saha, 2012

To analyse the deeper links between these indicators and the levels of urbanization, a correlation matrix has been developed taking all these indicators together (Table 7). A closer look into this correla-

tion matrix reveals that all the four indicators i.e. access to water and sanitation, housing condition, socio-economic condition and the levels of urbanization are positively and highly correlated to each other. The level of urbanization is again correlated with all other indicators individually which partly explains that urbanization plays a big role in bringing other development indicators to a higher level. Therefore, we can say that among all the variables, there exists a strong positive correlation and these correlations help to strengthen our argument for a settlement to become urban.

Table 7: Correlations Among Access to Water and Sanitation, Housing Condition, Socio-Economic Condition and the Level of Urbanization

	Access to water and sanitation	Housing condition	Socio-economic condition	Levels of urbanization
Access to water and sanitation	1.00	0.85	0.77	0.85
Housing condition	0.85	1.00	0.90	0.92
Socio-economic condition	0.77	0.90	1.00	0.93
Levels of urbanization	0.85	0.92	0.93	1.00

Source - Saha, 2012

Urban Administration and Services

The second argument for the recognition of urban settlement by the state in the form of ULB can be built on the provision and improvement of infrastructures (roads, markets, electricity etc.) and basic services (such as water, sanitation, health, education etc.) in the existing census towns which are experiencing faster growth. In West Bengal, the new census towns being peripheral in their locations outside the existing urban-industrial regions, are very poor in infrastructures and services as these are governed by Gram Panchayats which are not capable of providing those services at the level of existing ULBs. Moreover, in West Bengal the funds for urban basic services under several programmes come from international agencies such as World Bank and DFID, which cannot go beyond the level of Statutory ULBs. Although there is a wide gap in the allotment of such funds between the ULBs located in Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA) and the ULBs located outside KMA, at least there are provisions for basic health (IPP and IPP extension), education (SSA), water (UIDSSMT) and sanitation (KUSP) programmes for the statutory towns. The absence of such funds for the census towns makes the provision of basic services difficult thus leading to the poor level of services in these towns.

Regulation of Growth

The third argument for statutory urban can be the checking of haphazard physical growth in the census towns which makes the future planning difficult when it comes under the Municipal structure. The rules and regulations for construction of buildings are more stringent with ULBs in West Bengal whereas Gram Panchayats do not have any fixed rules and regulations for controlling the haphazard growth of built up area. Lastly, it can be argued that constituting municipality can generate more taxes from the inhabitants of the towns which can facilitate better provision for infrastructures and services.

Conclusion

In the present day globalizing economy, development activities in India such as mining, industries, real estate and construction are mostly taking place either under private capital or under public-private partnership. These activities prefer to be developed in the peripheral locations away from existing urban-industrial agglomerations. Therefore, these are taking place either in Special Economic Zones (SEZ) where there are generous subsidies from the Government or in the locations beyond the urban limit such as suburbs of big cities and 'non-recognized' urban territories. The preference for non-recognized urban territories comes from the lack of control and policing measures under poorly equipped rural local level governments.

Because of this lack of efficient regulating means under the existing governance structure, these non-recognized urban territories are becoming areas of anarchism. The places which are experiencing increasing industrial activities are being characterized by high level of pollution and consequent degradation of local economy and environment. The new mining activities in these areas find the land acquisition and displacement issues much easier to handle. Lastly the absence of proper governance mechanism is leading to bizarre state of land transformation in these new urban areas. In the process of keeping urban as rural, the local citizens suffer from numerous problems starting from pollution and land speculation to utter negligence of basic services and infrastructures such as roads, water, sanitation, health and education. However, there are sections of people who benefit from this system of keeping places beyond the efficient urban governance mechanism as stated by one gram panchayat pradhan (head of the gram panchayat) from Barjora Agglomeration - "As long as this anarchist rule (ram rajatya in Bengali meaning lack of efficient governance mechanism) prevails, the running system is good for some groups – big land developers and real estate agents, industrial houses, politicians and police, who can earn a lot from non-legal and non-formal activities". A single gram panchayat is not capable of governing the emerging situations in these places and there is no co-ordination platform for different panchayats located in one agglomeration to control the situation. The paper thus ends with a simple question - how long can we deny urbanization and leave these non-recognized urban territories to the state of not being properly governed?

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