

Development of New Townships: A Catalyst in the growth of rural fringes of Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA)

Ar. Uttam K. Roy,

B. Arch, M. Planning (Housing), uroy@wbati.org

Associate Professor, Urban Management Centre,
Administrative Training Institute, Kolkata

Abstract:

Urban areas are the engines of the development of rural hinterlands in any region. Effective planning in the regional scale provides appropriate preference and promotion of industries and commercial activities. Generation of jobs attracts people from the rural surroundings for livelihood. In Kolkata, several New Townships are being developed. This is creating a major development impetus in the region. Namely New Town, Rajarhat has already been started its development. This will create enormous employment opportunities, which obviously would be a benefit for the rural surroundings and villages. The change of the livelihood from the primary sector to the secondary and tertiary sectors is getting very fast. In the near future the profile of the Kolkata Metropolitan Area obviously will change due to the development of those New Towns. The economic activities will be well decentralized if the development goes as per intention.

1.0. Introduction

Urbanisation is an obvious process of civilisation. Development of urban areas facilitates the development of rural areas in the region. Specially when an intended planned development takes place then the sudden change in the land market, physical infrastructure, employment generation etc give a boost to the economy of the vast rural hinterlands. In Kolkata Metropolitan Area and its surroundings three numbers of New Towns are being developed. These made noticeable changes in the living and growth of the predominant rural areas in fringes.

2.0 Outline of Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA)

The urban agglomeration along both banks of the river Hooghly in Kolkata is designated as Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA). It extends over 1350 sq km and has a regional influence of vast area known as Kolkata Metropolitan Region (KMR). KMA accommodates major share of urban population in West Bengal and spreads over six districts. It has a comprehensive mix of settlements as shown below:

Table I: Composition of KMA

Sl no.	Type of settlements	nos.
1.	Municipal Corporation	3
2.	Municipal Council	38
3.	Non- Municipal Urban	70
4.	Out growth	14
5.	Rural Areas	422

Source: Perspective Plan, Kolkata 2025, KMDA



2.1 Demographic Profile

KMA is having a population of 14.96 million as per 2001 census. It falls among ten big metropolises in the world. Kolkata Municipal Corporation is having largest share of population. A major share of population of KMA is due to migration from various parts of states and also from other states.

2.2 Economic Base

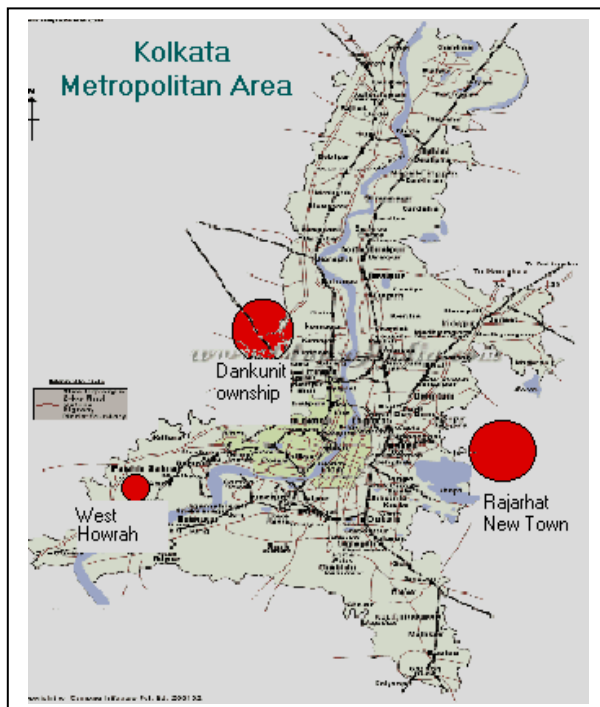
Around 54 percent of total workforce is engaged in tertiary sector and around 41 percent is engaged in secondary sector of economic activities. The major wholesale market of West Bengal in items like animal livestock, cement, coal, iron and steel. Manganese ore, kerosene, wood and timber, raw jute wheat, tea pulses other than gram products, spices, fruits, potato etc. Cater to the entire eastern region.

The economic base of the KMA contributes substantially to the total revenue collection of both the central and state governments, Kolkata city alone shares about 82 percent of annual sales tax collection and about 98 percent of annual income tax collection of West Bengal.

In the field of Trade and Commerce also the KMA plays a pioneering role. Kolkata port and a number of wholesale markets act as gateway to trades and commerce in the entire eastern region. The share of Kolkata port on both inland and foreign cargo handled declined before 1983, but then it increased consistently.

3.0 New Towns in KMA and surroundings

To decentralize the increasing economic activities from Kolkata and to increase the future housing stock in the Metropolitan area several New Townships are proposed in and around Kolkata Metropolitan Area by KMDA in the Perspective Plan for Kolkata 2025. The rapid increasing population is creating unplanned and unauthorized development in the rural periphery of the metropolitan area. This is creating excessive stress in the existing urban infrastructure and in the environment of the city. The planned intervention in the way of developing New Townships will probably manage the unintended developments.



3.1 Settings of the New Townships

In the Perspective Plan for Kolkata there are several growth centres in the metropolitan area. Proposed New Towns are located in the potential economic growth centre as envisaged in the Perspective Plan for Kolkata.

New Townships are proposed judiciously just outside the urban extent of the KMA. More or less these are located in the continuity of the existing urban agglomeration. The surrounding area predominantly rural or semi rural in economy, infrastructure etc are influenced by the development of New Townships. These are well connected with the national highways, state highways and other arterial roads of Kolkata.

3.2 Outline of Proposed New Towns in and around KMA

Table I: Salient feature of New Towns

Features	New Town, Rajarhat	Dankuni Township	West Howrah Township
Location	Just outside the KMA East of River Hooghly	Inside the KMA West of River Hooghly	Inside the KMA West of River Hooghly
Area	3075 ha	Approx 3000 ha with a additional 2400 ha upgradation area.	40ha
Population	10 lakh	15 lakh	N.A
Developing authority	West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation (WBHIDCO)	Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA)	Private developers collaborated with Govt. of West Bengal
Present status	Most of land acquisition complete Development in 30% area complete very low Population is achieved	Land acquisition is in progress	Land Acquisition is in progress. MoU with developers and Govt is complete.
Economic Base	IT and other non polluting industries, Administrative and other commercial sectors	Agro based, livestock, clay, textiles, and other hi-tech non-polluting industries	Mainly residential

3.3 The influence of the New Townships on surrounding rural areas

These New Townships are having regional and city level facilities, industries etc. These will generate employments for all sectors of the society. The support stuffs of the offices and commercial establishments will be available from the nearby villages. Other than the engagement in commercial offices, administrative offices, industries and large facilities a major portion of employment will be generated from the huge capital investment on the building industry. The offside infrastructures like road, rail is to be made for the new Townships on regional level. This regional road network / rail network definitely will give an impetus for the growth of the rural and semi rural areas also.

Besides the improved infrastructure of New Townships has created a sudden increase in land value in the prevailing land market of the region. It attracted the possible big investors who are getting this land nearby the new Townships and making a further enhancement of the impetus for the urban growth of the rural settings.

3.4 Change in livelihood of the rural population

There are very comprehensive changes in the economic base of the rural areas. These are many folded as listed below:

1. Those whose land are acquired / purchased by authority they are being engaged in the other sectors of economy.
2. Those who are intentionally changed there livelihood from agriculture to tertiary sectors after selling their agricultural land to other private developers
3. Those who are residing in the nearby villages and got employment in various sectors in the development of the new Townships.

3.5 Emerging issues in the development of the region

Several issues have come up in the development of the region. Those are as follows

Firstly, interdependence of rural and urban area is going to change in the present scenario. Due to provision of regional transport networks and facilities the rural areas are becoming the centre of all attraction day by day. Rural people are more eager to have their machinery and other inputs required for the agriculture etc in the rural area itself. The banking sector, school and other facilities are attracting developers in the rural fringes.

Secondly, the development control in the rural areas in the fringes are also another issue as these are growing very rapidly and with less control due to its location under panchayet area. This has to be looked after in the regional scale.

Thirdly, the location of industry in the new towns is also important upcoming issue. Industries are being located in the environmentally safe location in respect of the new town and immediate surroundings. In course of time this will be in the centre of developed area as the surrounding rural areas are also getting developed.

Transport linkage in the region reflects another area of attention. In the prevalent rural fringe area the existing transport facilities are having extra passengers but the frequency is not so good. With the development of the fringe area the transport system has to be improved.

3.6 Relevance of PURA in the regional development

The regional development vision does have an outline similar to the PURA concept. There are proposal of ring railway as well as eastern expressway in the eastern part of Kolkata (not shown in the map). These networks connect the Proposed New towns. The major development will take place in the side of this transport network and create a huge market and development in the rural hinterland due to increase of land value. This transport network also after crossing the river Hooghly connects the new towns in the other side of the river and creating same development opportunities. Thus it is creating the induced development potentials in the fringe of KMA. Moreover there are proposal to provide urban facilities including urban roads in the rural neighbourhood of the new towns. This will also add pace to the development of the rural fringe area. So it may be opined that the development of the region is in the line of PURA only and envisaged in the perspective plan of Kolkata

4.0 Case Study: Rajarhat New Township

4.1 *Location and background*

In the year 1994 the proposal for new townships began to be crystallized and after detailed study of the existing scenario the present development began to start in 1999 after the formation of a new development corporation named West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (WBHIDCO) by the government of West Bengal. The site is situated just outside the metropolitan boundary but in the continuity of the urbanized area of the northeastern Kolkata. The area was purely agricultural with lower productivity. But

due to the nearness to the city several unscrupulous and unplanned developments started to come in the neighbouring area. Stress on infrastructure is growing day by day and overall environmental condition is getting deteriorated. That needed some planned intervention. WBHIDCO got the planning rights for this area after its formation and formulated its master plan keeping in mind the objective of decentralizing the major urban economic activity from the city of Kolkata and to provide a planned intervention in existing rural settlements in the surrounding areas. The area as was very low was vulnerable for flooding. The basic proposal was given to upgrade the level and then providing the infrastructures for New Town.

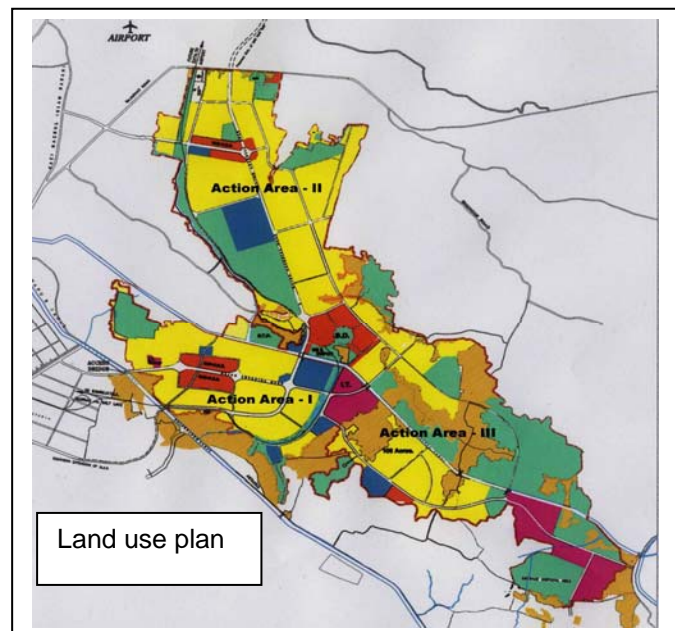
4.2 Detailed Proposal

A population of 7.5 lakh was envisaged in an area of 3075 ha. Other than this residential accommodation there are proposals for providing city and regional level infrastructures, which can generate employment as well as can make the city more than self-sufficient. A major linkage was conceived and partly developed with E M Bypass (the eastern most arterial road of Kolkata) and with national highway no. 35. The east west metro or MRTS is proposed to connect the New Town with the other part of the city. There are also provisions of development of non-polluting industries along with other administrative and commercial establishments, which are likely to come in the New Town.

The land use break up of the township is as below:

Table II Land use Break up

Use	Area in ha	%age
Gross residential	1555	50.5
Industrial	200	6.5
Commercial like CBD and Sub CBDs	140	4.5
Institutional, health and cultural	20	0.7
Major roads	300	9.7
Large open spaces and water bodies	860	28.0
Total	3075	100



4.3 Proposed regional level urban infrastructures likely to generate employments

- General hospitals
- Interstate bus terminus
- Truck terminal
- Central Business Districts
- Convention Centre
- Open air fair ground
- Large amusement park
- Cultural complex/ multiplex

4.4 Investment potential of New Town

There will be a huge investment in various development of new town. This investment will generate number of new jobs each year. This will make a change in the economy of neighbouring rural semi urban areas

Table III: Investment potential of New Town

Sl no	Investment	Investing source	Rs in crore
1	WBHIDCO for basic infrastructure	Public authority (from selling of plot and loans)	3000
2	Real estate	Public, private, joint venture, individuals and cooperatives	14500
3	Business development	Same as above	16000

Note: Analysis on the basis of proposed land use and prevailing building regulation, cost of infrastructure development at present day price.

4.5 Assessment of job generation during the development of New Town

The huge investment told above will generate number of unskilled and skilled jobs each year of development as shown below:

Table IV: Assessment of jobs in the New Town

Sl no.	Development	Developed by	Generation of jobs	
			Skilled	Unskilled
1.	Basic infrastructure including land filling	HIDCO and other govt agencies	10 lakh man day	30 lakh man day
2.	Development of building and complexes	West Bengal Housing Board and there joint ventures agency	15 lakh man day	25 lakh man day
Total			25 lakh man day	55 lakh man day

Note: Analysis based on internal survey as estimated

Other than these jobs there will be more jobs in the commercial, administrative and other sectors. In addition there will be a need for the various types of service people for the residential population on New Town. This service people will have to come from neighbouring village area. In fact there is a proposal for developing a service village in the New Town. Practically the neighbouring villages will act as service village

4.6 *Economic and physical development of the rural commanding area.*

The development of New Town will have a direct influence in the economy in surrounding approx 60 sq km of village area. The participation in the jobs in the New Town mainly in the unskilled jobs will increase the economic standards of the people and accordingly the purchasing power will be increased. This will attract new development potentials on the village area. Initiatives are also been taken to develop the connectivity of the neighbouring villages as a scheme under neighbourhood development. This will make the village more viable alternative for investors.



5.0 Conclusion

There are immense potentials for the growth of the vast rural hinterlands as these are situated very near to KMA/ New Townships or having near distances with regional road network for the New Townships. But, there are also possibilities of having unintended developments, which may affect the environmental sustainability in future. So the big issue is to control, manage those developments by proper planning legislation though not developed by the authority. In the near future the urban form of KMA is going to change rapidly and accordingly this will act a catalytic role in the urbanization of the region as well as West Bengal

References:

1. Bysack Rahul Kumar: Housing Development in the New Town around Kolkata: Unpublished thesis: School of Planning and Architecture, 2004
2. KMDA: Perspective Plan for Kolkata, 2025:
3. Roy Uttam Kumar: Morphology of Housing in a New Town, Rajarhat, Kolkata: unpublished Thesis, School of Planning and Architecture, 2000.
4. Shelter, HSML: Cities, the Engines of Rural Development, special issue, 2005
5. The Census of India
6. WBHIDCO: The Project Report of New Town, Kolkata: 1999