

## CHAPTER 5

### SILIGURI IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

Integration of the local market to the global markets through opening the economy to the world is called Globalisation. It is generally conceived that globalisation is the expansion of the neo-liberal market economy.<sup>245</sup> Market assumes the role of key player which leads to changes in the nature of binaries like global/local, *desi/videshi*. Globalisation has a huge impact on the socio-cultural and economic aspect of life in a city. The growth and development of Siliguri changed momentum after the opening of the Indian economy. This chapter looks into the impact of Globalisation on Siliguri.

The geographical location of Siliguri is such that to enter the heart of the city one has to pass through a corridor of length 38 km and breadth of 20 km situated between two international borders of Bangladesh and Nepal. The moment we pass the airport, which is located at Bagdogra, we can see glass building shops, busy markets, illuminating sign boards decorated on both sides of the highway announcing vacant paths for sale, new townships or hotels and schools. The four-lane highway is cautiously barricaded and decorated with floodlights. The ten-kilometre that from Airport to Darjeeling more speaks a ton about the spatial-physical changes Siliguri has undergone. The boundary of University of North Bengal, High-rise buildings of Uttorayon Township, rail-line running parallel to highway and the scenic beauty of distant mountain chains sparkle the eyes of visitors. Cities and towns are central to the strategy of development pursued by globalisation induced development has led to structural adjustment and new spatial organisation in cities and towns. Henceforth, the policies of the government are in tune with a philosophy of percolating the essence of globalisation to every hook and corner of cities and towns. Siliguri too, could not refrain itself from the waves of globalisation as we see a lot of restructuring of physical spaces within and outline the city.

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<sup>245</sup> Harvey, D. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2005.

Siliguri is the best example of a city shaped by local and regional processors by national as well as international forces.

#### Globalisation and Restructuring of Spatial Organisation

The development of the Siliguri city began from the locality called as Naya Bazar and Khalpara. These two localities were very close to the town railway station. The beginning saw new construction of warehouses and *godowns* meant for wholesale trade. There were no big industries in the town and the town began serving as a wholesale trade point for supply of goods to North-Eastern region of India. The geo-strategic location of Siliguri transformed it into a major hub for wholesale trade. The constructions of godowns and warehouses were followed by establishment of retail shops and a few consumer goods industries, but these were meant for only local consumption. One of the earliest settlements, Subashpally, which is located near the town railway station, is an example of the fact that one can witness huge warehouses packed with consumer goods. These goods are meant to be supplied to the North-East Indian states.

The Indo-China war of 1962 was an eye opener for the Government of India and thereafter the Government devoted itself to improvement of roads and rails in and around Siliguri. New bridges were constructed and a special reference can be made to the Mahananda Bridge. This Mahananda Bridge gave ample scope to the city development and also accelerated the expansion of the city towards the North-Western direction. The construction of the third Mahananda bridge connected the city with the western areas and the city began to expand towards western direction. The expansion of Siliguri city began from the locality called Hakimpara. It was from this locality that the city began to expand in all directions and the momentum gained only after the Government adopted the new economic policy during the 1990s. The economic liberalisation had a huge impact on the city of Siliguri as because the whole spatial organisation<sup>246</sup> was re-structured. The first move towards spatial restructuring was

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<sup>246</sup> The idea of spatial restructuring has been vividly discussed in the research article of Yu, Z., Xiao, L., Chen, X. *et al.* Spatial restructuring and land consolidation of urban-rural settlement in mountainous areas

the declaration of Siliguri Municipality as Siliguri Municipal Corporation in 1994.<sup>247</sup> The change of status from *Nagarpalika* to *Maha-Nagarpalika* was due to pressing demand arising due to the unprecedented growth rate of the area. The *Mahanagar* region constituted a huge area of about 42 square km. The original area which comprised 30 wards was expanded with the inclusion of 17 wards to the Corporation. The total area of 47 wards recorded a total of 42 square km. within the jurisdiction of Siliguri Municipal Corporation. The major effect to this spatial reorganisation was that it gave fillip to the growth and development of nearby peri-urban areas. Another step to spatial reorganisation was making Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority (SJDA)<sup>248</sup> as the chief nodal agency for growth and development of the region. SJDA was formed under the provisions of West Bengal Town and Country Planning and Development Act 1979. This body came into complete action only after 1994 i.e. only after the declaration of Corporation. SJDA and Siliguri Municipal Corporation together came forward with a “new approach paper” regarding urban Development of Siliguri.

The Siliguri Jalpaiguri planning area constituted six police stations of Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, Bhaktinagar, Matigara, Naxalbari and Rajganj. The whole area was also divided into five Blocks called “Community Development Block” like Phansidewa, Naxalbari and Matigara in Darjeeling District and Jalpaiguri and Rajganj in Jalpaiguri District. There are also two non-municipal urban areas Uttar-Bagdogra and Bairatal. There are approximately 290 *Moujas* in Urban areas which are included in the SJDA area. The planning and development activities of Siliguri Jalpaiguri Planning area included Jalpaiguri, Siliguri, Naxalbari, Phansidewa but the focal point has always been Siliguri due to the unique geographical location.

Post 1991 when liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG) was infused into the Indian scenario, the nation witnessed huge growth in the direct foreign investment in the

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based on ecological niche perspective. *J. Geogr. Sci.* 28, 131–151 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11442-018-1464-2>

<sup>247</sup> "Welcome to Siliguri Municipal Corporation, Siliguri, West Bengal." <http://www.siligurismc.in/>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

<sup>248</sup> "Siliguri & Jalpaiguri Development Authority." <https://www.sjda.org/SJDA/>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

Indian Economy. LPG led to expansion of market in the regional areas and Siliguri could not keep itself aloof from the vibrant economic changes the country was undergoing. Siliguri needed an agency which could pave the way for its holistic development and SJDA was one such agency which facilitated the whole process of Globalisation in Siliguri. In 2004, SJDA came forward with "Perspective Plan 2025". The vision of the Perspective Plan was that there would be an improved infrastructure and Science Centres along with social amenities for all health and hygienic development and also for growth of body and mind within the framework of ecologically sustainable aspects. (SJDA, 2004, xiii)<sup>249</sup>

The whole spatial restructuring of Siliguri and adjoining areas by the Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority was based on two important aspects. The region was divided into two prospects. The settlement hierarchy within SJPA has been formulated on the basis of the dominance of Siliguri Municipal Corporation (SMC) in SJPA, as well as in North Bengal, as a centre for trade, financial institutions, socio-cultural facilities and transportation. The opening of the Nathu La leading to new avenues in cross-border trade, commerce and tourism and the regional road and railway linkages is also an important reason for zoning the region.

The area under zone 1 includes the region in and around Naxalbari Block. Physiographically the area is in the intermediate plains between rivers Mechi and Balason. The area is well supported by rich and fertile cultivation lands in the south producing surplus rice, paddy, jute and vegetables. The contiguity to international borders in the west and southeast with Nepal and Bangladesh respectively make the region of immense importance. Zone 2 counts the Westward expansion of Siliguri Municipal Corporations. The residential areas with extended commercial zones, with important transportation nodes, facility centres and commercial and institutional like government, semi government and private corporate establishments can be found in this zone. Zone 3 includes the North-West expansion of the

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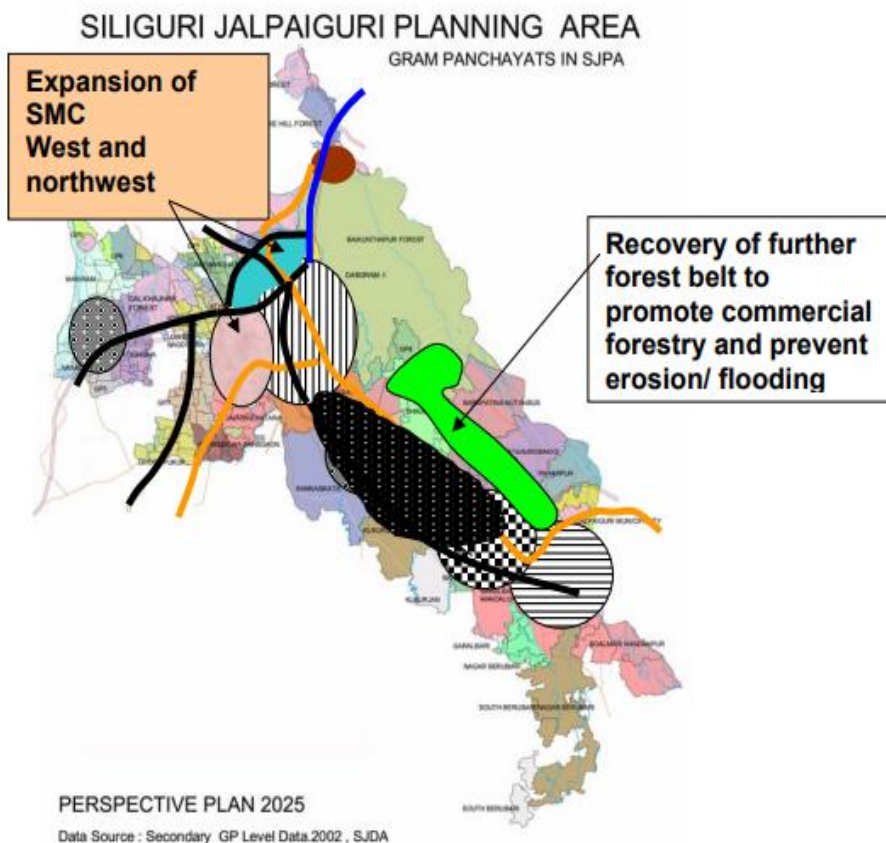
<sup>249</sup> "Karotoya 2021 with cover for pdf.pmd - Institutional Repository NBU."

<https://ir.nbu.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/3955/1/Karotoya%20vol%2012%20Article%20No%207.pdf>.

Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

corporation around East and West of NH 55 and is mainly restricted to the Champasari and Chadmoni areas.

Map 11: West and North West Expansion of Siliguri city



Legend	Details
	West Naxalbari settlements (Zone I) (Mainly due to consolidation of production economies)
	West extended SMC settlements (Zone II) (Mainly due to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mahananda bridge augmentation)
	North-west extended SMC settlements (Zone III) (Mainly due to high-tech industrial zones and tourism)
	Sevok Station Commercial and Transhipment Hub related settlements (Zone IV) (Mainly due to Nathula Pass trade prospects)
	High and Low density Settlements in Central Rajgunj CD Block (Zone V) (Mainly due to Eco-tourism, consolidation of production economies)
	West extended Jalpaiguri M. settlements (Zone VI) (Mainly due to consolidation of local agro-tech production economies)
Linkages	Railways  Main Roadways  Nathula linkages

.Source: Perspective Plan, 2025

This area is dominated by high-technology commercial and institutional trading centres related to micro technology, software development technology, nano-technology and biotechnology. Zone 4 is basically a Transshipment zone, around Sevoke and a commercial hub. Earmarked as a ‘Special zone’ with Sevoke node and other commercial corridors, it serves as the trade linkages to Nathula and the rest of SJPA and the larger region. Zone 5 includes the Central Rajganj (Municipality) extending up to railway lines from SMC going towards Assam. A detailed analysis of the relationship between liberalisation and free market economy and development and zoning of Siliguri is discussed later in this chapter.

The main questions arise why the administrators of Siliguri opted for zoning practice in Siliguri? The spatial reorganisation was essential and it provided the background for Zoning Siliguri. This has to be evaluated within the larger framework of the aims of urbanisation to create and construct neo-liberal globalised cities. The unprecedented growth in population leading to urban sprawl could possibly be one of the reasons but the motivation to form these zones around the core Siliguri were dictated through the discourses of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation for creating ‘spaces’ where the big global real estate players with the help of ‘local Sharks’ under the government banner of public-private partnership (PPP model)<sup>250</sup> could invoke Marx’s ideas of ‘The Circuit of Money Capital.’<sup>251</sup>

#### Globalisation, Migration and the Urban Sprawl<sup>252</sup>

There is a soft interconnection between globalisation migration and urban sprawl. Liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation introduced the new world of consumerism to the Indians. Thus the policy of foreign direct investment and new consumerism circuitously led to

<sup>250</sup> "Public private partnership models (for public services) - Thales." 25 Dec. 2020, <https://www.thalesgroup.com/en/markets/digital-identity-and-security/government/identity/public-private-partnerships>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

<sup>251</sup> "Capital Volume II - Chapter 1: The Circuit of Money Capital." <https://www.marxists.org/subject/economy/authors/fox/ucv2-ch01.htm>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

<sup>252</sup> "The Characteristics, Causes, and Consequences of Sprawling ...." <https://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/the-characteristics-causes-and-consequences-of-sprawling-103014747/>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

the evolution of new markets to fulfil the requirements of the people. Migration of the people was the natural outcome in the new economic scenario in the country. This new induced migration was responsible for unequal accumulation of people in the new land of opportunities and Siliguri is one such example which shows how from a migrant town it transformed to a transit town.

Urban sprawl can be understood as an unimpeded diffusion of the urban characters of a city into its adjoining suburbs. It includes the construction of residential and commercial structures in the nearby areas of city fringes. As the outlying area becomes more and more populated the consequent impact is an outward expansion of settlement patterns. The word urban sprawl was created by William White and defined it as a “physical pattern of low-density expansion of a large urban area under market conditions into the surrounding agricultural areas.” The sprawl is mainly due to augmented population pressure. The growth rate of population in Siliguri has been incredible and it was higher than West Bengal average between the census years. The census report of 1991<sup>253</sup> reflects that the population of Siliguri municipal corporation was 2,16,954. However, when we match it with the census report of 2001, we find that the total population of the Siliguri Municipal Corporation was 4,72,374.<sup>254</sup> It is remarkable that the decadal growth rate was 117.3 percent and it marked the highest in the history of the area. The most important question in our mind arises why and how there was such a huge decadal growth (17.73%) of the population in Siliguri.

It is very interesting to study the pattern of migration that has been one of the most important and primary contributory factors to the growth of population in the Siliguri Municipal Corporation area. Migration as a phenomenon in the whole of North Bengal is attributed to the

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<sup>253</sup> "Darjeeling - Census of India."

[https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB\\_A/19/1901\\_PART\\_A\\_DCHB\\_DARJILING.pdf](https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB_A/19/1901_PART_A_DCHB_DARJILING.pdf).

Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

<sup>254</sup> "Welcome to Siliguri Municipal Corporation, Siliguri, West Bengal." <http://www.siligurismc.in/>.

Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

growth of the population. In fact, population surge in many cities<sup>255</sup> in the world such as New York, London, Tokyo, Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi etc. has been due to migration rather than any natural increase.

Trans-border migration to Siliguri Municipal area and also to the nearby areas was imminent because we have data that reflects that people who migrated from Bangladesh migrated for the reason of justified political sanctuary following the partition of India in 1947 and afterwards the Indo Pak war of 1971. The people who migrated from Nepal came here for new economic opportunities in a socio-economic survey of households conducted by Siliguri Municipal Corporation in 2004, it was revealed that approximately 60.9% of the total household in Siliguri municipal corporation area were migrants from different districts of West Bengal. Approximately 13.3% of the household came from the neighbouring state of Bihar and 7.2 % of the households came from other states. It was interesting to note that approximately 17.4% of the migrants were from Bangladesh and 1.2% migrants from other countries.<sup>256</sup> The migrants within West Bengal which comprised 60 per cent were actually the resultant outcome of the shutting of the Tea industries in North Bengal post Globalisation.

The turn of the new century witnessed phases of deep crisis in the tea industry. There are examples that as many as 72 tea gardens in the Dooars were marked as unproductive and hence many were closed down. The tea gardens which are still operative are struggling for its existence. According to Gupta and Bhattacharya, more than 3000 permanent workers lost their livelihood. The five recently closed tea gardens in Alipurduar accounted for as many as 15,000 workers with 45000 dependents.<sup>257</sup> The Tea industry which was considered to be the backbone

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<sup>255</sup> "Urbanization and the Megacity - World Population." <https://worldpopulationhistory.org/urbanization-and-the-megacity/>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

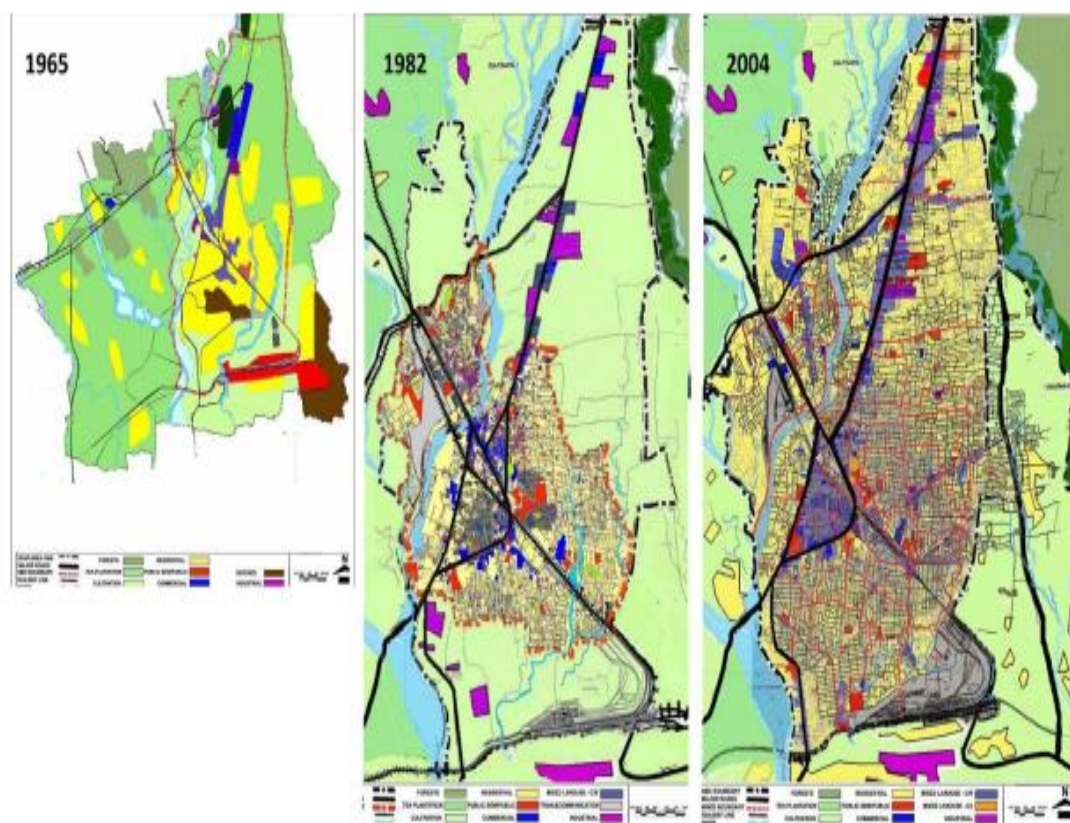
<sup>256</sup> Darjeeling District Statistical Handbook 2004, Bureau of Applied Economics & Statistics Government of West Bengal, published in 2005. Some dates were collected from the office of the Mayor, Sri Ashok Bhattacharya, Siliguri Municipal Corporation between 2018-2019.

<sup>257</sup> Pinak Priya Bhattacharya & Jayanta Gupta, "Hunger deaths stalk Bengal tea country | Kolkata News - Times of ...." 30 Jul. 2014, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/hunger-deaths-stalk-bengal-tea-country/articleshow/39194027.cms>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.



of the economy lost its importance. The crisis in the tea gardens acted as a boon in disguise for Siliguri in the era of globalisation because their workers in search of jobs migrated towards Siliguri. These migrants served as daily wage labourers in the real estate sector which saw an unprecedented boom due to globalisation.

Map 12: Siliguri land use progression trend



Source: Siliguri Municipal Corporation (2017)

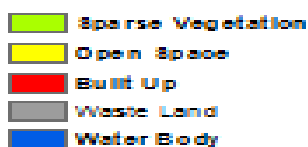
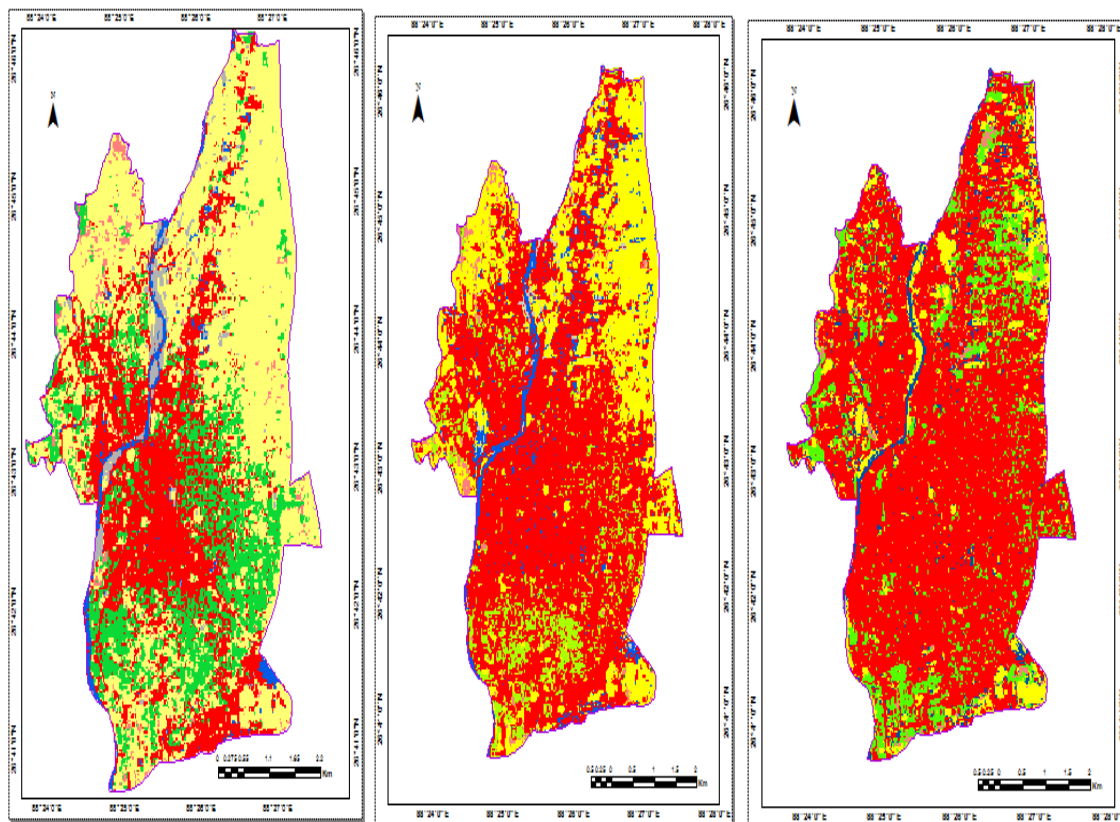
The phenomenal rise of population led to excessive pressure on land and we observed a drastic change in the land use pattern of Siliguri municipal corporation area. The changing settlement pattern can be best understood with the use of remote sensing and GIS techniques. Land pattern use is the product of resource utilisation by the population subsisting on it. Unprecedented growth in population leads to demand for new settlement areas which in turn are compromised with the encroachment of the nearby areas of the developing city.

Map 13: Showing Land Use GIS maps of SMC (A) 1991, (B) 2001 (C) 2017

A

B

C



Source: Siliguri municipal Corporation

. The land-use statistics of Siliguri municipal corporation area of the year 1991 reflects that there was 47.9 3% of open space. This indicated that there was ample space for the accommodation of the increasing population of the Siliguri town. The reports of the year 2001 witnessed a total change in the scenario. The 117.7 3% population decadal growth rate as reported in the Census of 2001 totally corresponded with the data that was derived from the GIS report of 2001. The GIS report of 2001 points out that the open space was reduced to 28.0 1%

from 47.9 3% in 1991. To make the situation worse, the GIS report of 2014 says that the open space in the Siliguri Municipal Corporation area was only 6.78%.<sup>258</sup>

It is very important to understand the zoning system which was adopted by the government of West Bengal in general and implemented by the Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority. From 1990 the International Monetary Fund IMF induced structural adjustment programme SAP was introduced throughout India and it was one of the policies adopted by the government of India in new economic policy. The practice was one of the proponents of SAP and the Siliguri development area was divided into four zones as mentioned earlier in this chapter. The impact of Globalisation on Siliguri cannot be complete without studying these Zones because it was the globalisation that gave birth to these Zones to facilitate the processes of globalisation.

Zone 1 included the South-West corner of the Siliguri City and it corresponds to the present day Naxalbari area. If we minutely study the impact of SAP we can come to a conclusion that it was once a battleground for the Maoists and Naxalite now practices full-fledged commercial residential activities with facility centres like utility centres, trading centres, Agro service centres and small leather processing centres. The history of Naxalbari is not hidden from any scholar of Humanities and Social Sciences. Physiographically the area is located between Mechi River and Balasan river blessed with rich and fertile cultivable land and the location of Kharibari Ghoshpukur four-lane bypass acts as linkages to Siliguri Municipal Corporation. The Zone 1 area shares International boundaries, in the West. Thus it becomes apparent that zone 1 serves the real motto of International border trade prospect of globalisation because it is through these International passes we find the import and export of goods to Nepal, China and Bangladesh. It also provides sufficient challenge to the authorities because through these

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<sup>258</sup> "Census Data 2001 - Census of India." [https://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/census\\_data\\_2001.html](https://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/census_data_2001.html). Accessed 3 Jun. 2021. The data on GIS was collected from Prof. Sushma Rahotgi, Dept. of Geography, University of North Bengal.

vulnerable points illegal cross migration and the influx of cheap Chinese products enters India.<sup>259</sup>

Zone two represents the westward expansion of Siliguri Municipal Corporation. The North of this Zone includes Champasari, the East shares the boundary with Siliguri Municipal Corporation and the South includes the lower Mahananda Bridge up to South-west Mahananda link canal and in the West and it includes the Phansidewa-Matigara link highway. This zone is dominated by residential areas. This also facilitates municipal corporations with transportation nodes and commercial as well as institutional buildings with corporate establishments. This zone is very important because it serves as a link between the East and West border areas of Siliguri Municipal Corporation and also establishes northbound trade to Matigara *haat*. Economically this is very important to the Siliguri Municipal area because post globalisation period we find a development of Agro-Tech industries along with livestock-related production centres. We also have software parks and herb culture parks in this area.

Zone 3 is also very important for the Siliguri Municipal area because it represents the Northwest expansion of Siliguri Municipal Corporation. Geographically this zone is restricted to Champasari and Chandmoni area. We also have all the important educational institutions of Siliguri in this area. To name a few Siliguri Institute of Technology, Pragati College of Education, Sri Sri Educational Institute. This area has also witnessed a huge investment in the real estate sector. Major realtor players like Mayfair, Bengal Ambuja, Shanthinikethan, Vishwakarma builders and other local builders are developing new ventures along NH-31 and Sevoke road of Siliguri region. Zone 4 acts as a transshipment area and earmarked as a special zone with Sevoke as it's the nodal point. It serves an important trade linkage to Nathula and the rest of SJPA and the larger region.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> "Siliguri surfacing as major illegal international gold trade hub - The ...." 25 Apr. 2016, <https://m.economicstimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/siliguri-surfacing-as-major-illegal-international-gold-trade-hub/articleshow/51979297.cms>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

<sup>260</sup> Fieldwork report conducted between 20018-19.

Thus we see that the Zoning of the areas around Siliguri was a product of policies to boost Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation. In return, these zones acted as feeder corridors in the growth and development of urbanisation in Siliguri Municipal area

Globalisation, Markets and the Political Economy of Siliguri.

Market and trade liberalisation are the cornerstones of globalisation processes. In simple terms, it reflects the density change in the interaction between the global and the local, and the international and the national. Thus economic globalisation promotes candid and greater interaction between production, organisation of production, distribution points where markets come to centrality and also consumption because the consumption pattern determines market and production graphs. Neo-liberalism demanded loose government control and regulations of economic activity in favour of the market forces.

An important aspect of understanding the structural adjustment design by the government in favour of liberalisation and privatisation can only be understood as a 'conditionality' of loan packages from the International Monetary fund. The world International banks like IMF and ADB play a vital role in forcing the Governments of any country, especially the Developing and Third world countries to open their country to Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation. Easterly tries to name some of these conditionalities like 'reduced domestic credit expansion, reduced budget deficit, currency devaluation, freed controlled prices, reduced trade barriers, increased privatisation and also deregulation of markets to name a few. This has been discussed later as how in Siliguri the Tertiary sector saw phenomenal growth in State Domestic Product<sup>261</sup> between 1993-94 and 2000-01 in two sub-sectors i.e. 272% in 'Banking & Insurance' and 132% in 'Public Administration'.

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<sup>261</sup> "State domestic product and district domestic product of West Bengal ...."

[http://www.wbpspm.gov.in/SiteFiles/Publications/2\\_18052017142017.pdf](http://www.wbpspm.gov.in/SiteFiles/Publications/2_18052017142017.pdf). Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

### Post Liberalisation Economic Profile.

Siliguri became the commercial hub for the entire North Bengal, North-Eastern States and also some parts of Bihar like the areas of Kishanganj and Katihar. The traditional mainstay of business in Siliguri was based on tea, tourism and timber. However post-liberalization we find the besides strengthening the traditional mainstay business the new markets that developed in and around Siliguri after the New economic policies of the 1990s catered the economic demand of the large hinterland of Dooars, Darjeeling, the entire state of Sikkim, the Kingdom of Bhutan as well as parts of North-East India. It became the nodal point of location from where the cargos are transferred from one carrier to another. The boom in the organised retail business, hospitality industry and the real estate investment completely metamorphosed the economic scenario of the city. Siliguri also developed into a city with a large number of trading centres and readymade markets for consumer goods and is thus a candid home to myriad retailers, wholesalers, dealers, distributors and small-scale entrepreneurs, transforming it into the commercial nerve centre of North Bengal.<sup>262</sup>

To understand the impact of globalisation on the economy of Siliguri Municipal Corporation we have to understand the State Domestic Product as a key indicator to assess the health as well as the dynamics of the economy of a region or of a state. The data on estimated net district domestic product is not available at a level below a district. Accordingly, the data on Siliguri Municipal Corporation is deduced to make an assessment of the economic activities and their movement over time in the era of globalisation.

Under the Tertiary sector, there has been phenomenal growth in SDP between 1993-94 and 2000-01 in two sub-sectors - 272% in 'Banking & Insurance' and 132% in 'Public Administration'. The widespread growth of Banking & Insurance activities has been the result of the opening of the banking and insurance business to private players in the new liberalised economic regime. The economic activity-wise data reveal that 'Retail Trade' is the single

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<sup>262</sup> This is an excerpt of some of the viewpoints made by the Mayor of the Siliguri Municipal corporation.

largest group of establishments in SJPA, accounting for 47.4% of the total number of enterprises. Next in size is the group 'Community, Social and Personal services' representing 18% of the total number of enterprises in SJPA.<sup>263</sup>

In analysing the impact of Liberalisation of the primary sector of Siliguri we find that the impact was very disastrous. The data compiled shows that between 1993-94 and 2001-02 i.e. approximately over the last eight years, the contribution of the Primary sector to SDP has fallen from 42.2% in 1993-94 to 31.3% in 2001-02 for the districts and it corresponds to the Siliguri municipal area. (Source: Statistical Abstract, Bureau of Applied Economics & Statistics, W.B). The fall has been considerable in Agriculture – the sub-sector that accounts for the lion's share of State Domestic Product in the Primary sector. Agriculture production is almost null in the SMC area because when we compare the GIS data of the year 1991 and 2001 we find that the decreased open space in the SMC. These open spaces one served as land for growing vegetables and dairy activities but with the passage of the shrinking open space, the city mainly depends on its surrounding villages for vegetables and dairy activities. However, forest industries have flourished in recent decades. Siliguri has revealed a tremendous potential for wood as well as timber-based industries because the region is rich in these natural resources. It has a number of West Bengal Forest Development Corporation Ltd. (WBFDC) joinery and carpentry units that supply high-quality furniture and joinery items to the public at competitive prices. Besides, sawn timber is sold to buyers and dealers in bulk from Government sawmills in Siliguri. WBFDC is responsible for selling sawn timber like sal, teak, dhupi and jarul at fixed prices to the public through its retail sales centres in West Bengal including in Siliguri. A lot of economic activities are based on forest resources in and around the Siliguri municipal area. Baikunthapur forest is one of the important forest ranges within Siliguri Jalpaiguri planning area and it provides economic livelihood to many people. Despite being a protected forest, in this era of globalisation Baikunthapur forest had been subjected to tremendous pressure for fuel, house

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<sup>263</sup> The data was collected from *Draft Development Plan 2008-09 to 2012-13*, Siliguri Municipal Corporation.

posts, hatch and other forest produce and thereby to uncontrolled destruction of forest resources. There is another important Reserve forest, namely, Apalchand Range, a little away from SJPA and a good deal of economic activities based on the produce of the forest takes place in SJPA. Siliguri is the main market for the major forest produce. A part of Sal and miscellaneous logs extracted by West Bengal Forest Development Corporation (WBFDC) is given to government sawmills under WBFDC and the remaining sold on auction. The wood available in the region has given a boost to veneer and plywood making units in SJPA. Nevertheless, Sal timber is the most important and the highest revenue earning produce of the region. With an increase in demand for timber like Sal and Teak and consequent rise in prices, inferior varieties of timber such as Champ, Panisaj, Gamar, Jarul are finding ready markets. There is a great demand for House posts or Sal poles from the local population, tea industries and also the West Bengal State Electricity Board. Thus we see that globalisation led to the ever-increasing demand of sal and timber products which are supplied and marketed throughout North India.

A considerable number of small-scale and cottage industries (grill factory, atta mills and steel furniture) are spread over the municipal area, predominantly in the wards of the Sevoke Road area and Burdwan Road. The formal service sector also contributes significantly to the local economy within the municipal corporation. It encompasses academic institutes (schools, colleges and other academic institutions), automobile repair centres, banks and post offices, health institutions, hotels, retail outlets and trading centres which are located along transportation corridors like Burdwan Road, Sevoke Road, and other major local roads. These outlets of the service sector are served by local people. As per data collected from SMC, till the year 2014, there are 31,981 commercial establishments in the city which includes Fish, meat Poultry shops 384 in number, Fruits and vegetable shops 5,341, Groceries and provisions shops 356, Eating Places 4,314, Pan and Cigarettes shops 3,500, Textile and Clothing shops 2,500, Medical shops 2,000, Computer and Electronics shops 136, Electrical Hardware and building materials outlets 1,211, Household merchandise shops 331, Furniture and Interior decoration shops 157, Jewellery shops 953, Optics and watches shops 478, Footwear outlets 1231,



Recreation centres 17, Transport points 500, Service Outlets 5000 and other miscellaneous 533.<sup>264</sup>

#### Liberalisation and the Secondary and Tertiary Sector of SMC

Post Liberalisation the share of the secondary sector has risen marginally. It is interesting to look at the trends of industrial growth in Siliguri. The problem is that there is no data separately for SJPA that is readily available. To look into the impact of globalisation on the industrial sector we have to make a comparative study of the set of data collected under the Annual Survey of Industries covering both Census and Non-Census sectors. The data reveals that the number of factories in Siliguri Municipal corporation, registered a fall between 1980-81 and 1990-91, there was very passive and mundane growth in fixed capital, invested capital and productive capital during this period leading to absolute decline. As for the ‘number of workers’ and ‘number of employees’, registered between 1980-81 and 1990-91 showed prosperity.<sup>265</sup> This means that one hand industries, investment, and production capital were declining but there was an increase in the number of people who were ready to sell their labour.

In the period following 1990-91, spectacular growth in not only the number of factories but also in ‘fixed capital’, ‘invested capital’, ‘productive capital’, ‘number of workers’ and ‘number of employees’ had taken place in Siliguri municipal area and the new zonal areas around Siliguri. The ‘number of factories’ recorded more than two and a half times increase, the shares in ‘fixed capital’, ‘invested capital’ and ‘productive capital’ had shown more than ten times rise. This is perhaps due to more capital-intensive methods being adopted among the newer factories being set up in the area. Another interesting observation that the data reveals is that although the average capital base of a factory is much smaller for the two districts than the same for West Bengal, the rates of growth in ‘average fixed capital per factory’, ‘average

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<sup>264</sup> The data were collected from *Draft Development Plan 2008-09 to 2012-13*, Siliguri Municipal Corporation

<sup>265</sup> The data were collected from *Draft Development Plan 2008-09 to 2012-13*, Siliguri Municipal Corporation

invested capital per factory' and 'average productive capital per factory' had been much larger in the districts of Darjeeling in general and Siliguri in particular. On the contrary, while the 'average number of workers per factory' has registered an increase in the SJPA between 1990-91 and 1997-98, the same for West Bengal has fallen. This implies that despite the rapid expansion of the capital base of industries in SJPA, capital intensities of industries in other industrialised districts of the state are much higher. Another notable feature of industrial growth is that the average wage per worker is far lower in the SJPA than the same for West Bengal. This can be explained partly by the lower cost of living in the two districts and partly by the lower incidence of highly skilled workers coupled with a higher incidence of migrant workers.

These phenomena are indicative of the fact that the SJPA experienced a very fast growth of factories engaged primarily in manufacturing activities in the years following 1990-91. In fact, this is the period when a new liberalised economic regime had been initiated in the country, including the abolition of the 'licensing regime' which was the main reason for the growth.

In the era of globalisation, The distribution of the number of registered factories according to NIC classification in 2000 shows that 'manufacture of food products' constitutes one half of the total number of registered factories. The next major group in the two districts is 'manufacture of wood and wood products, furniture and fixtures', accounting for nearly 19% of the total number of factories in 2000. Around 6% of factories are found in 'repair services', which represents heterogeneous and footloose service industries. It is observed that 'manufacture of food products'; 'manufacture of wood and wood products, furniture and fixtures'; 'electricity'; 'land transport' and 'education, scientific and research services' are the ones to reckon with. There have been substantial increases in 'fixed capital', 'invested capital', 'productive capital' and 'number of workers' for the 'manufacture of food products' industry in 1997-98 over 1996-97. This is the industry whose 'net value added' works out to a relatively high figure of Rs. 300 crores during 1997-98. The relatively high concentration of units in 'manufacture of food products' in the region is due to the considerable growth of certain fruits

and vegetables as well as tea plantations in the region. There are, however, two other industry groups, namely, 'manufacture of cotton textiles' and 'manufacture of wool, silk and synthetic fibre textiles' that have witnessed considerable growth in 'fixed capital', 'invested capital', 'productive capital' and 'number of workers' between 1996-97 and 1997-98 have little or no presence in SJPA. The abundant availability of forest resources in both districts facilitated the growth of this industry in the past. However, the growth has been considerably curbed in recent years due to a ban imposed by the Supreme Court of India on felling of trees in the forests. The incidence of 'repair services' units are found to be more in larger urban centres in the state of which Siliguri is one. Growth of these units can be seen without a concomitant growth of manufacturing industries. With the rise in urbanisation, 'repair services' industry shows steady growth over the years in respect to the concerning attributes. Small-scale industries have been playing a significant role in the industrial scene of SJPA. It not only contributes substantially to the SDP of West Bengal but also provides a great deal of employment.

In the post-GATT (The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) industrial scenario, the small-scale sector has emerged as an important segment. While the WTO-led globalisation policies have opened up new opportunities for the small-scale sector, on the one hand, the sector is also confronted by stiff, often unequal competition, on the other. The share of SJPA with the exclusion of non-Siliguri part of Darjeeling in the total small-scale industrial scene of the state is not very reckonable, although the same has registered a marginal increase between 1997-98 and 2001-02. This has happened because the growth in the number of small-scale units as well as in employment in the SJPA-districts has been much higher than the same in the remaining parts of the state. One interesting phenomenon of the growth has been that of Jalpaiguri experiencing much higher growth in a number of units than that of Siliguri, on the one hand, and Siliguri's witnessing very high growth in employment as opposed to slightly negative growth in employment in Jalpaiguri, on the other.

Thus, the growth of small scale industries in Siliguri has been based on labour-intensive methods of production. One of the important sub-sectors of small scale industry is Handicrafts.

The industrial estates at Dabgram in Jalpaiguri and Ektiasal near Siliguri provide organised facilities for setting up of small scale industries. The example of establishing Biswa Bangla Silpi Haat at Khawakhali, Siliguri bears testimony to the above fact. Lack of growth of the small-scale sector is no unique phenomenon for the region, as, under the new WTO-led globalisation regime, the small-scale industries all over the country have been subjected to stiff competition consequent to withdrawal of reservations for them on a number of scores.

Both the State Domestic Product data and Economic Census data have revealed that there has been substantial growth in economic activities under the tertiary sector during the last decade. The largest share of 25% of SDP is contributed by banking & insurance businesses, which have received a boost as a result of policies of economic liberalisation being followed at the national level. With faster urbanisation in the region, demands for banking and insurance services rise, especially from the trading sector. The next largest group of activity is 'trade, hotel and restaurant' accounting for 20% of SDP. Whereas hotel and restaurant businesses are related to tourism, trading is a significant economic activity in the SJPA region providing income and employment opportunities to a large number of people, particularly in the informal sector. In the trading sub-sector, wholesale trading activities play an important role in the economy of Siliguri municipal area as well its entire hinterland extending over the North Eastern states and the countries of Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. SJPA houses a number of large market centres – both wholesale and retail in nature. The opening of banking and insurance businesses to the private sector as a fallout of the liberalised economic regime across the country provided a fillip to this sub-sector to grow rapidly in urban areas. The growth of manufacturing industries in the Siliguri areas received impetus from the various policy reforms such as dismantling of licensing regime, the abolition of freight equalisation for coal and steel, incentive schemes designed by the State Government for promotion of manufacturing industries, liberalisation of imports and exports etc. The encouragement to private investment in the backdrop of various policy reforms shall result in better utilisation of the region's vast resources through the establishment of manufacturing industries in the region. The basic question that would confront planners is

whether Siliguri should continue to be characterised by predominant mercantile nature of its economy or should the areas be seen as a potential manufacturing industrial base, of course, maintaining a structural balance between secondary and tertiary sector activities.

In the context of fast urbanisation of the SJPA region, predominance of non-agricultural activities will continue to shape the economy of the region. So far, tertiary activities including trades and commerce have witnessed pre-dominant growth. But for the economy of SJPA and more generally of North Bengal to have sustained growth, it should be imperative to encourage growth of manufacturing and processing industries in the SJPA region, as apart from marketing opportunities, the region is rich in natural and agricultural resources. A considerable contribution to the SDP of the region is made by 'education and related services'. As a result, the availability of educated and technically skilled personnel in the region is more than in other places. All these resource bases facilitate the prospect of industrial growth in the region. Siliguri is also fast emerging as an information technology (IT) hub, an alternative destination for Kolkata, for info-tech companies. Siliguri already has good infrastructure and modern amenities for people who work in IT parks. Some major IT companies have already set up bases in Siliguri. The West Bengal Government has set up an IT park in Siliguri recently, to provide bigger opportunities to IT/ITES companies to start their businesses in Siliguri. However, the IT firms are located outside the municipal boundaries. The working conditions in these IT firms are very poor.

As per the 2011 Census<sup>266</sup>, the city has 1.88 lakh workers who account for 37% of the total city population. The Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) has increased from 33% in 2001 indicating a net increase of 29,874 workers. Main workers account for 88% of all workers, the remaining being marginal workers who are involved in employment for less than 6 months. Analysis of the sectorial share of workers shows that about 1% of the total workers in the City are engaged in primary sector activities, 3% in the secondary sector and about 96% -a

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<sup>266</sup> "Darjeeling (Darjeeling) District Population Census 2011-2021, West ...."

<https://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/1-darjiling.html>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

phenomenal share - in the tertiary sector. As discussed above there is meagre scope for primary sector activities within the city limits. Tea processing, timber and other manufacturing units form sources of secondary sector employment. It is also observed that these industries employ regional workforce from nearby rural areas. The workforce within the city is predominantly occupied in tertiary sector activities which include trade, transport, hotels, real estate, etc. In 1991, 85.3% of the total workforce was engaged in the tertiary sector. Out of 158,058 workers in the SMC area, only 1.9% comprises cultivators and agricultural labourers. In 2001, the secondary sector accounted for 0.3% and tertiary as much as 97.9% of the total workforce. This indicates the dominance of the tertiary sector in the economy of Siliguri.<sup>267</sup>

With the increasing role of Siliguri as a regional trading centre and also a regional transport node for the entire hinterland extending over the North-Eastern states and the adjoining countries of Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, the transformation of the areas both within and surrounding Siliguri began to witness changes in terms of economic pursuit and land use and development. The centrifugal forces originating in Siliguri led to spread of urban areas around and given the physiographic constraints, the urban sprawl was directed towards the formation of zones, and in the process, taking away lands under agricultural use for urban uses. This was one of the reasons for the declining share of the agriculture sub-sector. Thus we see that the areas under Siliguri Municipal Corporation have been witnessing a very fast growth of non-agricultural economic activities. Siliguri MC area is the hub of such economic activities in not only SJPA but also the entire North Bengal comprising the districts Malda, Uttar Dinajpur, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling. The economic importance of Siliguri derives from the vast hinterland extending over not only North Bengal but also the North Eastern States and neighbouring countries of Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The growth of economic activities within SJPA is leading to not only increasing population and urbanisation in SJPA but also due to the structural changes.

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<sup>267</sup> The datas were collected from Census Reports

## Markets:

Siliguri has been growing as a distribution centre in North Bengal, North East India, Sikkim, Bhutan and other adjoining areas and this has led to a rapid increase in the wholesale trade markets in Siliguri. The largest wholesale market is the Siliguri Regulated Market.<sup>268</sup> The distinctive features of the market are that whereas it hardly regulates prices, it handles large volumes of Merchandise composed of varied items. The items in the market come from areas both in and around Siliguri and from different corners of the country. A good quantity of agricultural produce comes to the market from Kharibari and Naxalbari areas. The items traded in the market largely flow to areas outside Siliguri and little is consumed locally. Apples and pears come from as far as Delhi and Himachal Pradesh and go to the different districts of North Bengal and the North Eastern States; mangoes come from Malda in West Bengal and Muzaffarpur in Bihar and move to local markets and Assam. A large volume of bananas come from Bihar and cater to local markets of Siliguri. Sweet lemons are brought from Tamil Nadu and dispatched to both local markets and Assam. Pomegranate flows in from Nasik in Maharashtra and is sent to local markets as well as to the state of Assam and Sikkim. Among important vegetables traded are cauliflower, cabbage, carrot, tomato, potato, onion, egg, bitter gourd etc.<sup>269</sup> that flow to the market from SJP and surrounding areas. Despite the existence of large wholesale markets characterising the economy of SJP as a mercantile one, infrastructure in the markets are poor.

On a survey of the Regulated market, it was found that there were hardly any public utility services such as water, public convenience, telephone etc. and also there was an inadequate warehouse and cold storage facility. Interestingly, it was found that not all goods traded in the wholesale markets are produced in Siliguri and adjoining regions but are transported from faraway places. This is why transport activities are quite booming in Siliguri.

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<sup>268</sup> "Siliguri regulated market committee - West Bengal State Agricultural ...."

<http://wbagrmarketingboard.gov.in/Siliguri%20RMC.html>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

<sup>269</sup> "Siliguri regulated market comm Mandi prices in West Bengal ...." <https://agriplus.in/mandi/west-bengal/siliguri-regulated-market-comm>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

As per the report of Siliguri Municipal corporation commercial establishments in the SMC area number 45,230; of these, 33% are registered and 67% unregistered and informal in nature. About 8% of commercial establishments are wholesale shops.<sup>270</sup>

Among the retail markets Bidhan Market, the chief marketing centre of Siliguri, is situated in the heart of the city, in the shape of a triangle whose vertices are Hashmi Chowk (or Hospital More), Sevoke More and Pani Tanki More. There are three different kinds of markets within this triangle – the daily market, the New Market and the HongKong Market. Situated close to the Bidhan Market, but south of the railway line are the Mahabirsthan Market and the Khalpara wholesale market. The other major markets are the DIF Market, the shopping on Hill Cart Road, the Gate Bazaar Market on Old Matigara Road, the Champasari Daily Market, and the regulated market for wholesale of perishable goods, the Ghugumali Daily Market, Phuleswari Daily Market, Station Feeder Market, Jajodia Market and the Shaheed Bhagat Singh Market Complex.

Most of the economic activities in Siliguri are found in the two streets of Sevoke Road and Hill Cart Road. Many traditional stores and hotels dot the street while Sevoke Road flaunts sophisticated stores and most of the city's banks. There is also another famous market for electronic goods, which goes by the name of Hong Kong Market. The Hong Kong Market is popular with locals as well as tourists who visit the city for cheap imported goods, usually from the Chinese market as well as from places like Nepal and Thailand. Most of the gadgets available are quite cheap and thus allure tourists. Presently there are 550 shops in Hong Kong Market; these sell foreign goods like electronic items, cosmetics and clothes and employ as many as 1,500 persons. The Seth Dress material is famous for Dress materials for women, artwork, handcrafted products and bags, eateries, food courts and there are approximately 400 shops as per the data collected from the secretary of the Union of Seth Srilal market. Apart from these many shopping malls are rising rapidly on the either sides of the highway and roads of Siliguri signalling growth of modern infrastructure facilities in the city. The national and

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<sup>270</sup> Data based on the field work conducted between 2018-2019.



international branded goods' shops in these malls facilitate trading and commerce. Some of the malls are: Cosmos Mall, Sevoke Road, a large and up-scale mall, City Mall, Orbit Mall, includes an INOX movie theatre, Vegas Mall also with multiplexes, City Style mall, Sun Flower mall all situated on Sevoke road. We also have City Center, Uttarayan, and the Vishal Mega Mart standing tall on the Burdwan Road. Automobile companies are also gathering in Siliguri with their numerous Showrooms. Toyota Kirloskar, Maruti Suzuki, Honda, Ford, Tata, Mahindra & Mahindra, JCB, Hyundai, General Motors are some examples of this. Two-wheeler showrooms also take their position at the share of the Economy of Siliguri. Yamaha, Hero Honda, Kinetic, TVS Suzuki, Honda scooters, Vespa, Bajaj, LML etc. all these top-ranked companies are now present at Siliguri. With the increasing economic transactions in Siliguri some major banks both private and nationalised like HDFC, ICICI, Standard Chartered, Allahabad, State Bank of India, UTI, UCO, IDBI, Vijaya, UBKG bank etc. have opened their branches. In the era of Globalisation Siliguri has turned out to be the desired destination for most of the investors and financiers of India.

Thus we see that the liberalisation of the Indian economy had a huge impact on Siliguri and resulted in the spatial re-organisation of Siliguri. The first step in spatial reorganisation was the declaration of Siliguri municipality to Siliguri Municipal Corporation in 1994.<sup>271</sup> The spatial re-organisation of the city provided the necessary backdrop for zoning Siliguri which could be analysed within the larger framework of urbanisation programmes to recreate neo-liberal globalised cities. In return, these zones acted as feeder corridors in the growth and development of new markets in the Siliguri Municipal area.

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<sup>271</sup> "Welcome to Siliguri Municipal Corporation, Siliguri, West Bengal." <http://www.siligurismc.in/>. Accessed 3 Jun. 2021.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The research begins with analysis of conceptual theories and review of literature pertaining to urban studies. Urbanisation and development have been examined through the three macro approaches of 'Modernisation', 'Dependency' and the 'World System Theory'. From a Modernisation perspective, the transition from rural to urban society is conducive to the transformation from 'traditional' to 'modern', in terms of the technology of production and the orientation of individuals and social institutions. Dependency and World System Theory have focused on the mechanisms through which Developing Countries are made dependent on developed countries. Within many Developing Countries, the 'top-down' growth approach generated economic growth but at the cost of increased interregional disparities. The urban-bias approach was examined especially with respect to the rural-urban divide and rural-urban migration.

It can be well established that the spatial, economic, physical and geo-strategic manifestations combined to make Siliguri a metropolitan city. Urbanization is generally understood as a natural by-product and facilitator of some industrial development. But this is completely different in case of Siliguri because Siliguri has kept itself alive in the race of becoming a mega-city even though there is no industrial development. The model of urban development shaped by Rostow and Lewis in the early 1960's cannot be entrusted on the urban growth pattern of Siliguri. The growth and development of Siliguri cannot be understood on the platform of 'Dependency' approaches. It is probably true that development of Siliguri had its root in the colonial period but the geo-political pressures and constraints arising out of the locational position of Siliguri played a major role in the development of Siliguri. The idea of Clark that one of the influencing factors on the urban world is that the world itself has become coherent and integrated whole comes handy in understanding the impact of globalization in the urban growth of Siliguri. As discussed in this theories the pattern production as well as consumption in Siliguri was shaped by the globalization of economic and social activities.

Siliguri did not stand with the concept of traditionalism “as barrier to economic growth” as discarded by L. Wirth. It is a migrant city where there was no ‘folk like’ society that opposed to the integration of the market of the region into the world system. It whole heartedly accepted the inclusive ideas of globalization. Siliguri’s development is an example of assemblage of the urban transformation processes and it can be understood as a byproduct of interplay of region location, political choices, where geopolitics and globalization discourses played important role. Siliguri rose to its important position through decade of turbulent history of partition of India. Its location made the city geopolitically and economically very significant. The dynamics of migration has left its mark on the cultural and racial hybridity of the city. The spatial fabric and the urban forms reflected a mixture of different cultural layers.

The first chapter acts as setting the stage of this thesis. In this chapter, I have tried to trace the factors and changing political dynamics responsible for the growth of Siliguri from a small hamlet to a sub-division during the British period. The region during the whole period of 18<sup>th</sup> Century was contested as there was continuous strife between the Nepalese Raja, Sikkim Raja and sometimes the Bhutanese Raja and this discord was placated by the Britishers. Lawless bandits, Siliguri, Baikunthpur forest, and sanyasis form an interesting part of narration in this chapter. The British Frontier policy of Annexation made the *Terai* and *Dooars* strategically important. The annexation of Darjeeling from the Raja of Sikkim by the British East India Company in 1835 and the decision to make Darjeeling a sanatorium acted as a boon in disguise for Siliguri. The whole economy and communication system during this period was revamped. We see that jungles, hills, rivers, roads, railways, *haats* and almost everything in and around Siliguri participated in the growth and development of Siliguri. A mere village - ‘unhygienic and full of jungles and mosquitoes’, dreaded by Europeans, marauded by outlawed sanyasis, contested by Bhutanese and Kooch Rajas in the second half of the 19th century emerged as one of the largest and most developed towns of North Bengal. The journey to understand and comprehend the agencies of the historical processes in the making of this metropolis continues

in the next chapter where population growth and the changing social landscape of Siliguri are discussed.

The second chapter discusses the trends in population growth, the spatial distribution and the changing social landscapes of Siliguri. What were the driving forces that led to expansion of population in Siliguri? How migration shaped the urban discourse of Siliguri and became an important vehicle for urban process and social mobility for Siliguri? This chapter tries to offer answers to some of these important queries in the process of understanding the city of Siliguri.

The population of Siliguri increased even though it had no industrial fundamentals. In 1907 the population of Siliguri was only 784. Siliguri received recognition as a municipal town in 1951. The population in the corresponding year was 32,000 only. The growth of the town gained momentum just after the independence of India. The census report of the year 1961 shows the population of 65,471 and the year 1971 shows the population of 97,484. The census reports of 1981 and 1991 show the population of 1, 54,378 and 2, 16,950, but the census report of 2001 reflects a huge decadal growth rate of 117% with a population of 4, 72,374. The population of Siliguri metro area in the year 2014 was more than 8 lakhs and according to United Nations World Population Prospects it is projected that the metro area population would be above 10 lakhs. There was not one reason for such a change. The upgradation of Siliguri from Municipality to Corporation in 1994 and the inclusion of the peripheral areas changed the demographic structure of the region. Till 1994 Siliguri Municipality had 30 wards under its jurisdiction but after declaration as Municipal Corporation, 17 new wards were added to the existing 30 wards. But the main reason for the demographic transition in the region was migration.

Siliguri emerged as a migrant town and the profile and the nature of migration have considerably changed throughout the years. The Planning Commission agrees that the high surge in population was not due to the result of natural growth but because of significant

migration. The bulk of migrants not only constituted the Bangladeshi refugees but also the persecuted Bengalis that migrated from North Eastern states like Assam etc., and the non-Bengali speaking population like Marwari, Bihari and Nepalese that came from nearby areas in search of employment and new homes. The City was kind enough to accommodate all these migrants. A large number of rural people from different districts of West Bengal and other states in India have come into Siliguri city to search for jobs, betterment of life style, better medical facilities, better educational facilities and others. The heterogeneous population composition of Siliguri was one of the spin-offs of urban transformations. The growth of population was accompanied with the growth of economy and communication.

The third chapter carries the argument further by exploring the economic scenario and communication development in the region. The economic space as well as the transit spaces passed through colossal changes in context to Siliguri. Cities are shaped and reshaped by many historical and geographical features but at any stage in the city's history economic boom can occur and patterns of land use can change the transporting priorities. Thus, economy and communication can be the 'maker and breaker' of cities.

The market of Siliguri caters to a large hinterland of *Duars*, Darjeeling, the entire state of Sikkim, parts of Bhutan as well as parts of North-East India. Apart from trading, the 'Tea, Tourism and Timber' have accounted for major economic produce. Siliguri has a large number of trade centres and readymade markets for consumer goods and is thus home to myriad retailers, wholesalers, dealers, distributors and small-scale entrepreneurs. It is the commercial nerve centre of North Bengal. The city's strategic location makes it a base for commodity supplies to the North-East region. The development of the Tea industry was a big boon for Siliguri and the adjoining areas. The focus which was earlier towards the Hills began shifting towards the *terai* regions. Siliguri being on the foothills of the Himalayas began to develop as the 'Junction Point' of trade for dispatching the teas commercially to other parts of India and especially to Calcutta from where it was further sent to different foreign countries. The process of urbanisation led to the expansion of the town which had some adverse impact on the tea

gardens. The tea gardens are now converted to Satellite towns owing to demand for urban expansion, for example the Uttorayan Township was erected on the *Chandmoni* Tea Estate.

Locational advantage of Siliguri led to the growth of the wholesale trade market in Siliguri as the most important distributive as well as 'feeder Centre' since independence. Route connectivity of Siliguri to other parts of North Bengal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Northeast India led to tremendous growth in the wholesale business activities. Siliguri acts as a convergence point to all major and minor routes connecting North-Eastern States, Sikkim, Darjeeling Hills and to the neighbouring countries of Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The National Highways NH-31, NH-31A, NH-31C and NH-55, and the State Highways SH-12 and SH-12A are the regional road connectors that pass through the region. The National Highway 31 passes through the heart of the city and connects it to Delhi in the West and Guwahati in the East. District Headquarters like Darjeeling in the North, Jalpaiguri in the East and Kolkata in the South are well connected to Siliguri through State and National Highways.

Chapter 4 discusses the geostrategic importance and military establishments of Siliguri and its role at geopolitical level. It highlights the role of militarization in the growth and development of the region. It was the Britishers who first understood the strategic importance of this location when they were formalising their bilateral relations with Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal. Sino- India war, the Indo-Pak war and the creation of Bangladesh highlighted the strategic importance of Siliguri as reflected in declassified CIA secret files. The Siliguri corridor became one of the most military-sensitive spots and this led to the militarization of the region (recent Dhoklam issues is one such example that reintroduced the international distinctiveness of Siliguri).

Siliguri is landlocked with international boundaries like Nepal in the North and West and Bangladesh in the South and East. Bhutan is not very far from Siliguri as it is approximately only 93 miles. It has no access to the sea and is traversed by NH-31, the only road that connects Sikkim to the Indian mainland. This highway also connects the North Eastern States with India

peninsula through the Siliguri corridor making it one of the most strategic areas. It is also linked with the traditional trade routes of Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet, now a part of China.

Siliguri corridor connects North East India with the rest of India. This piece of land lies between two international boundaries of Nepal and Bangladesh on either side of the corridor. Siliguri corridor also called 'Chicken Neck' is an example of Colonial delusions created in 1947 during the partition of India and Pakistan. It is a very narrow stretch of passage of about 23.5 miles. The Corridor serves Indian military bases established in North East India and Sikkim with supplies, reinforcements and other military formations. The security forces operating in these areas point out that as geographical configuration puts the North Eastern States of our country at a disadvantage for a lack of strategic depth and the Siliguri Corridor is considered as an indispensable area to provide a buffer. The Corridor is the hub of road, railway and air networks connecting West Bengal to other North Eastern states of India. Geo Strategically it is also the nucleus of existence of Seema Suraksha Bal, Indian Army, and Border Security Force and is a spot to receive all the information related to Line of Actual Control with China in this sector. Any military envelopment in the eastern front from the Chinese would be carried out with an eye on incarcerating the Siliguri Corridor to cut off Northeast India from her mainland. The Siliguri Corridor is as important for China as it is for India. Given the strategic importance of the corridor it is heavily patrolled by Indian troops with different state and central border forces separately. The Indian government needs to look inwards to strengthen its military defence and infrastructure near Siliguri Corridor in order to counter a plausible Chinese military in future. The strategic location of the Town and the subsequent setting up of the military bases all over the region has certainly accelerated the pace of urbanisation and overall development of the region.

Thus this chapter establishes the fact that peri-urbanization was the most important impact of militarization of Siliguri. Militarisation created new political as well as social spaces (because of huge deployment of forces who come with their families and mushrooming of markets in the cantonment area.) The Border between India and Bangladesh and Nepal is fluid,

fragile with lots of contentions. Illegal inflow of Chinese goods (displayed in the Hongkong Market, and Airport Market), and cattle smuggling (weekly cattle bazaar at Matigara Hat) are some examples of the contentions. Siliguri with international boundaries with Nepal and Bangladesh and proximity to boundaries of Bhutan and China is prone to external threat, its proximity to the North East exposes it to internal security challenges from militant organisations and other subversives trained in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. The town cannot remain unaffected by the political disturbances in the hills over the issue of Gorkhaland either.

Thus, Siliguri is hemmed in by military establishments on all sides. It is deeply patrolled by the Border Security Forces, Indian Army, the Assam Rifles and the West Bengal Police. Headquarters of BSF and Shastra Seema Bal (SSB) located in Siliguri. The Central Reserve Police Force also has a substantial presence in the area. We have two Air Force bases of the Eastern Air Command— the Hasimara Air Force and the Bagdogra Air Force. The second largest military camp of Asia, Binnaguri, is also located not very far from the town. The sprawling cantonments and airfields at Bagdogra and Salugara are reminders of this strategic location. The proliferation of military personnel in the region impacts upon the economy of the region and opens up some job opportunities and educational facilities.

I have tried to appraise the impact of globalisation on Siliguri in my last chapter . I believe that if making of Darjeeling sanatorium by the British and introduction of Tea and Timber in the mainstay economy of the region led to the breakdown of isolation of Siliguri, it was ‘New Economic Policy of Liberalisation’ of the government of India that integrated the region with the world economic system. Soon after the opening of the Indian economy the spatial organisation of Siliguri was restructured. From *Nagarpalika* the status was raised to *Mahanagarpalika*. The major impression of this spatial reorganisation was that it gave impetus to the growth of peri-urban areas in and around the municipal corporation.

Siliguri became the commercial hub for the entire North Bengal, North-Eastern States and also some parts of Bihar like the areas of Kishanganj and Katihar. The traditional mainstay



of business in Siliguri was based on tea, tourism and timber. However post-liberalization we find that not only the traditional mainstay business strengthened, we also see growth of new markets that developed in and around Siliguri that catered the economic demand of the large hinterland of Dooars, Darjeeling, the entire state of Sikkim, the state of Bhutan as well as parts of North-East India. It became the nodal point of location from where the cargos are transferred from one carrier to another. The boom in the organised retail business, hospitality industry and the real estate investment completely metamorphosed the economic scenario of the city. Siliguri also developed into a city with a large number of trading centres and readymade markets for consumer goods and is thus a candid home to myriad retailers, wholesalers, dealers, distributors and small-scale entrepreneurs, transforming it into the commercial nerve centre of North Bengal. Siliguri became the distribution centre for North Bengal, Northeast India, Sikkim, Bhutan and other adjoining areas and this has led to a rapid increase in the wholesale trade markets in Siliguri. The impacts of economic globalisation in Siliguri are new commercial developments increasingly coming up through major real estate players. Mayfair, Bengal Ambuja Shanthinikethan, Vishwakarma builders and other local builders are developing new ventures along NH-31 and Sevoke Road of Siliguri region. A few malls have come up in Siliguri in recent years, like Cosmos Mall, City Mall, Kolkata Bazar, Orbit Mall, and Sevoke Road. Globalisation has led to growth of consumer culture among the residents of Siliguri. One simple example is the shift in consumption patterns of the middle class resident reflected in the multiplexes along with its associated digital bandwagon of social media reviews, forums, trailers, motion posters and online booking systems. Even if we make a comparative study of Bardwan, Kolkata and Siliguri we see that the urban growth of Siliguri was higher than the others. Thus, I have tried to establish that there was an indulgent cohesion between globalisation, migration, population growth, urban sprawl and markets.

In retrospect we can say that the strategic location of Siliguri made her cynosure of all eyes. The locational advantage of the region incited the proponents that led to urbanisation. The city has witnessed a rapid urban expansion. It has even gobbled up a tea garden and

neighbouring rural areas evicting in a large way the tea labour and the marginalised and pushing them to fringes of the city and the adjoining rural areas.