Inner-city and Outer-city Neighbourhoods in Kolkata: Their Changing Dynamics Post Liberalization

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Abstract

The central areas of the largest metropolitan cities in India are slowing down. Outer suburbs continue to grow but the inner city consisting of the oldest wards is stagnating and even losing population. This trend needs to be studied carefully as its implications are deep and far-reaching. The objective of this article is to focus on what is happening to the internal structure of the city post liberalization by highlighting the changing dynamics of inner-city and outer-city neighbourhoods in Kolkata. The second section provides a brief background to the metropolitan region of Kolkata and the city's role within this region. Based on ward-level census data for the last 20 years, broad demographic changes undergone by the city of Kolkata are examined in the third section. The drivers of growth and decline and their implications for livability are discussed in the fourth section. In the fifth section, field observations based on a few representative wards are presented. The sixth section concludes the article with policy recommendations.

加尔各答内城和外城社区：后自由主义化背景下的动态变化

印度最大都市区中心地区的发展正在放缓。远郊持续增长，但拥有最老城区的内城停滞不前，甚至出现人口外流。这种趋势需要仔细研究，因为它的影响是深刻而长远的。本文的目的是，通过强调加尔各答内城和外城社区的动态变化，关注正在发生的后自由化背景下的城市内部结构。第二部分提供了概括性的背景，介绍了加尔各答的大都市区，以及城市在这个区域内的角色。在第三部分中，基于过去二十年城区层面的人口普查数据，研究考察了加尔各答城市经历的广泛的人口变化。第四部分探讨了人口增长和衰退的推动力，以及它们对于城市活力的影响。第五部分展示了基于几个有代表性城区的实地观察。第六部分提出了结论与政策建议。

Keywords

Inner city, outer city, growth, decline, neighbourhoods

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Introduction

In the last two decades, population growth in the central areas of several of the largest cities in India has started to slow down (Kundu, 2011; Sita & Bhagat, 2007). Outer suburbs continue to grow but the inner-city consisting of the oldest wards is gradually stagnating and even beginning to lose population. Between 2001 and 2011, Kolkata city lost around 76,000 people. Although this represents a decline of only a small percentage of its 2001 population of 4.5 million, it nevertheless signals a new trend that needs to be examined more closely, at the neighbourhood level. It needs to be studied carefully as its implications are deep and far-reaching. While such tendencies are observable in the inner wards of Mumbai and Chennai, growth in the outer wards more than compensated for this and both cities, as a whole, grew in the last decade though at a slower rate.[1]

These data provide a corrective to the view that India's largest cities are growing rapidly when in reality there are several reasons for their slowing down. As in the West, improving transportation networks has played a role in the outward push from inner city to the suburbs and beyond, making it possible to live and work under better environmental conditions and on cheaper land. By the mid-twentieth century, many of the largest Indian cities had begun to spill over their boundaries (Shaw, 2005) and this tendency has strengthened over the last 60 years with urban planning efforts directed primarily at the newly developing areas. With continuing growth of the outer fringes of the city, the numbers of daily commuters and commuting distances have also increased markedly in Kolkata and other large Indian cities (Basu & Dhar, 2013).

An equally important reason for the slowdown has been constraints on land availability in the core of the city which, over the years, has meant that new growth must occur outside existing urban areas. According to a World Bank (2013) report, this could be the major reason for the slowing down of India's largest cities and Kolkata, along with Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Delhi, is suffering from metropolitan stagnation due to land unavailability. The report notes that, an 'assessment of India's urbanization, shows overall metropolitan stagnation—the core, suburbs and peripheries combined—in the concentration of people and jobs'. Restrictive land policies, such as, the low vertical heights of buildings permitted in Indian cities and the difficulties of recycling or redeveloping land, have dried up the scope for new businesses and residences and this is pushing people and firms to the outskirts of metropolitan cities, outside municipal boundaries. As a result of the 'draconian land policy', land for new housing and businesses is in short supply in the city and very costly forcing outward expansion, outside its boundaries. Thus, the largest metropolitan areas are getting more and more spread out and this is having negative consequences in terms of commuting time to work, cost of building networked infrastructure and environmental impacts. At the same time, the advantages of agglomeration economies offered by the cores of the largest metropolitan areas are not being realized. The World Bank report thus characterizes India's suburbanization as premature or as happening much earlier than that indicated by its level of economic development. According to it, Indian cities, in fact, are not utilizing the advantages of agglomeration economies offered by central locations and are prematurely looking outside the city to locate new economic activity. This is taking place even as large pieces of land lie within the core but need to be redeveloped from their current obsolete uses, such as, old docks, warehouses, derelict markets and even crumbling residential areas to new uses.

While the above assessment is alarming, reports of urbanization throughout the world indicate similar trends of metropolitan spread and India's pattern is no different from that of most countries, both developed and emerging. As noted in the following UN Habitat report on urbanization (UN Habitat, 2011, p. ix):

> More and more people both in the North and South are moving outside the city to 'satellite' or dormitory cities and suburban neighborhoods, taking advantage of accommodation that can be more affordable than in central areas, with lower densities and sometimes a better quality of life in certain ways.

Building outwards has been the common strategy rather than building upwards, although it is the latter strategy that has been advocated by numerous academics, global consultants and multilateral agencies to make cities compact and more environmentally sustainable (Jabareen, 2006; Kenworthy, 2006).

There has been a significant employment trigger to the outward spatial expansion of large metropolitan areas in India as well. Aggregated data of employment in the seven largest metropolitan cities have been examined by concentric bands or 'ring buffers' around the core, the first ring buffer being within 50 km of the centre of the city, the second from 50 to 100 km, the third from 100 to 200 km and so on (World Bank, 2013). They indicate that new jobs in manufacturing are locating outside the metropolitan regions. National Sample Survey (NSS) data show that the share of organized manufacturing employment in urban areas has declined from 69 per cent to 57 per cent during 1989–2005. Within the city, new jobs in manufacturing are mainly in the informal sector and manufacturing output from the organized sector has been declining as firms move to rural and peri-urban areas to take advantage of lower costs and better physical infrastructure (Ghani, Goswami & Kerr, 2012; Sasi, 2012).

Pointing out the economic loss of only building out, the benefits of building up are highlighted by the World Bank (2013) and certain economists (Brueckner & Sridhar, 2013; Glaeser, 2011). The latest Five-Year Plan document has endorsed the World Bank's suggestion of 'strategic densification' as a planning strategy or allowing higher vertical height along urban corridors or nodes where land value escalation is likely to take place (GoI, 2012, p. 329). However, some planning professionals outside the government have urged caution and the issue of building up or building out remains a highly debated one in India (Patel, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Greater Mumbai's draft development plan for 2034, which had endorsed an increase in permissible floor space index (FSI) from 1.33 to 8, was criticized on several grounds and has ultimately been scrapped (BMMC, 2015; Venkatraman, 2015a). Regarded as a builder-friendly plan, it was strongly opposed by planning experts, civil society groups and interested citizens for reducing open space and the 'no development zones' of natural areas in the city and the suburbs in its attempt at further densification (Venkatraman, 2015b).

The advantages and drawbacks of China's model of urbanization where major cities have rapidly expanded in both height and extent are only now being realized (*Economist*, 9–25 April 2014) and India could draw lessons from it. With an urban population of 730 million in 2014 (ibid., Special Report, 6), China has succeeded in accelerating its building activities and has been able to house a much larger number of people in high-rises in new neighbourhoods. However, in the inner city, this has often been possible by destroying older neighbourhoods with just a month's notice of eviction (Meyer, 2009) while, in the peripheral area, there has been considerable overbuilding as ghost suburbs built on cheap land acquired by the government in the edge of the city where farmers' property rights are weak, are a reminder of wasted resources and large-scale speculation (*Economist*, 9–25 April 2014).

In the debate over the best strategy for managing the scale and complexity of large metropolitan cities in populous countries, such as, India, many specific and ground-level factors become relevant, such as, the development history of the area within which the city is located, processes of demographic growth and decline, lifestyles of its residents and the nature of the state and its strategic choices in the post-independence era. At the ground level, even within a single metropolitan area, there are increasingly marked socio-economic differences such that 'bridging the urban divide' between the affluent parts and poorer parts has become an important target for UN Habitat (UN Habitat, 2011). In the World Bank report (2013), relative homogeneity is assumed to exist within the three distance-based concentric spatial bands around the city whereas the reality of economic opportunities and growth or decline is much more differentiated and nuanced. This can be better revealed with data at a more disaggregated level and at smaller spatial units. Likewise, the World Bank's argument of excessive and premature suburbanization in India overlooks the fact that demographic growth is still strong in the outer wards of the largest Indian cities. While many inner-city wards are ageing with lower population growth, smaller family sizes and

the departure of the younger generation to work outside the city, such wards need to be differentiated from the high growth outer-city wards, which are very much within municipal boundaries. Here, intensification of land use and infill development is still underway.

Clearly, more empirical studies are needed to throw light on the demographic and economic processes at work within the metropolitan area. This could be the basis of sounder policy making that balances the interests of residents of different socio-economic groups and the state. The objective of this article is to focus on what is happening to the internal structure of the city post liberalization by highlighting the changing dynamics of inner-city and outer-city neighbourhoods in Kolkata. Selecting wards that have been losing population since the 1980s and those that have been gaining population in the last 30 years, the article attempts to understand what is happening to the internal structure of the city since liberalization.

The second section provides a brief background to the metropolitan region of Kolkata and the city's role within this region. Based on ward-level census data for the last 20 years, broad demographic changes undergone by the city of Kolkata are examined in the third section. The drivers of growth and decline and their implications for livability are discussed in the fourth section. In the fifth section, field observations based on a few representative wards are presented. The sixth section concludes the article with some policy recommendations.

Brief Background to the Kolkata Metropolitan Area

The state of West Bengal, within which Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA) is located, is a middle-level state in terms of its key social and economic indicators (Shaw, 2012). The KMA is India's third largest in terms of population size after Mumbai and Delhi. Located in the eastern part of the subcontinent over an area of 1,886.67 sq. km and spread over six districts, its population according to provisional data of the Census 2011 is 14.11 million. The KMA, as shown in Table 1, consists of three municipal corporations, 39 municipalities, two cantonments, one notified area and 75 non-municipal or census towns and 446 rural bodies/villages.

This political fragmentation reflects the history of the region that was an important industrial area from the early twentieth century till about the 1960s. Many of the municipalities are former jute milling towns and received their municipal status during the late colonial period. Of the 41 urban local bodies,

Table 1. Composition of KMA: 2001 and 2011

	Categories of Area	Number in 2001	Area in sq. km in 2001	Number in 2011	Area in sq. km in 2011
1.	Municipal corporations	3	271.31	3	271.31
2.	Municipalities	38	615.49	39	633.41
3.	Non-municipal urban (census) towns	77	200.10	75	193.98
4.	Outgrowths	16	18.19	16	18.19
5.	Rural area	445	746.32	446	769.78
	Total KMA		1,851.41		1,886.67 *

Source: 2001 data taken from CDP of Kolkata, Chapter 1, p. 1.
Note: *Area expansion occurred in 2009.

only 11, that is, 27 per cent, of them have been created post independence (1947) and most of these new urban local bodies lie in the northern and eastern peripheries of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC). The latter is the oldest urban local body in the metropolitan area having been founded in 1,726 and can be regarded as comprising the core of the metropolitan area. The KMA is the state's most important urban region accounting for 51 per cent of its urban population.

Table 1 also shows the composition of the KMA by its different constituents and their respective geographical areas. Area wise, the KMC is the largest component with 200.71 sq. km of area as of 1 September 2012,[2] and 4.49 million people in 2011 or around 30 per cent of the KMA population. Over the years, the geographical area of the city has steadily increased the latest addition having occurred in 2012 when the outgrowth Joka was added to the south-western edge of the city. Wards 1 to 100 have been in existence since 1965 and can be regarded as inner wards today while 101 to 144, added post 1984, can be regarded as the outer city. What should be noted is that in 2011, 40 per cent of KMA's land was still rural accounting for only 8.7 per cent of its population.

Important for understanding the present situation of the metropolitan region is its post-independence political history. The Left Front, which was in power in West Bengal from 1977 to 2011, neglected the urban industrial sector and with the consequent decline of jute and engineering, the region's leading industries, the state's economic performance slid downwards. Increasing unemployment and declining urban places resulted in a slowdown in migration into the metropolitan area. The metropolitan area's growth rate slowed and continues to be slower than the average for million plus cities in India (Shaw & Satish, 2007). From 2000 till 2007, there was a kind of 'economic revival' in the state with an accelerated growth in state net domestic product, private investments, and an expanding information technology (IT) and services sector. Post 2007, the state faced major economic reversals with Tata Motors leaving after agitations over land in its Singur plant. Land-related problems ultimately led to the downfall of the Left and in May 2011, Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress came to power with an absolute majority. Banerjee has moved cautiously on any land-related issue and industrialization and several big-ticket infrastructure projects continue to languish but unlike the Left, Banerjee has sought to highlight Kolkata's cultural importance and has been active in its beautification and repair.

Overall, however, in the two decades post liberalization, West Bengal has not been successful in its attempts at large-scale industrialization but has had some success in the take-off of the services sector particularly in and around Kolkata. Thus, while Fordist production via large factories has not revived there has been increasing growth in a post-Fordist services sector comprised of IT and information technology-enabled service (ITES). This has brought some prosperity to the KMA. In 2011–2012, 14.66 per cent of the state's urban population (43.83 lakhs) was below the poverty line compared to 22.52 per cent (141.14 lakhs) in the rural areas of the state (Planning Commission, 2013). There are also wide variations in Human Development Index (HDI) between the urban and non-urban regions of West Bengal (Datta, 2007). Urban consumption levels have always been significantly higher than the rural. The latest data indicate that the average monthly per capita expenditure in rural Bengal is only 47 per cent of that of urban Bengal (GoI, Press Information Bureau, 2013). Thus, the pull of urban areas to rural migrants from nearby and longer distances is likely to continue but they are not necessarily heading for the Kolkata urban agglomeration. The growth of census towns during 2001–2011 nationally and in West Bengal, for the last two decades, attests to the emergence of other urban magnets. This is also likely to impact the growth of the city and its environs.

Other changes are also anticipated at the policy level. For the first time, the state has published an urban development policy that provides scope for raising the floor space of existing buildings under some conditions (economictimes.indiatimes.com, 2014). While realtors are buoyed by this, the changes have not yet been notified (timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 2014).

Demographic Changes in Kolkata City: 1991–2011

Between 2001 and 2011, the city of Kolkata lost 76,182 persons and its growth rate during this decade was –1.67 per cent in contrast to the decade of 1991–2001 when the growth rate was 3.93. The decline can be traced to the 1980s when some of the inner wards of Kolkata had started to lose population. Across the next two decades, the process has become more entrenched and has spread across the older 100 wards of the city. Figure 1 is a ward-level map of the city.

Ward-level census data from the 1990s indicate that population decline has been taking place in the inner city, in wards located in the north, central and western parts, while the outer city consisting of the
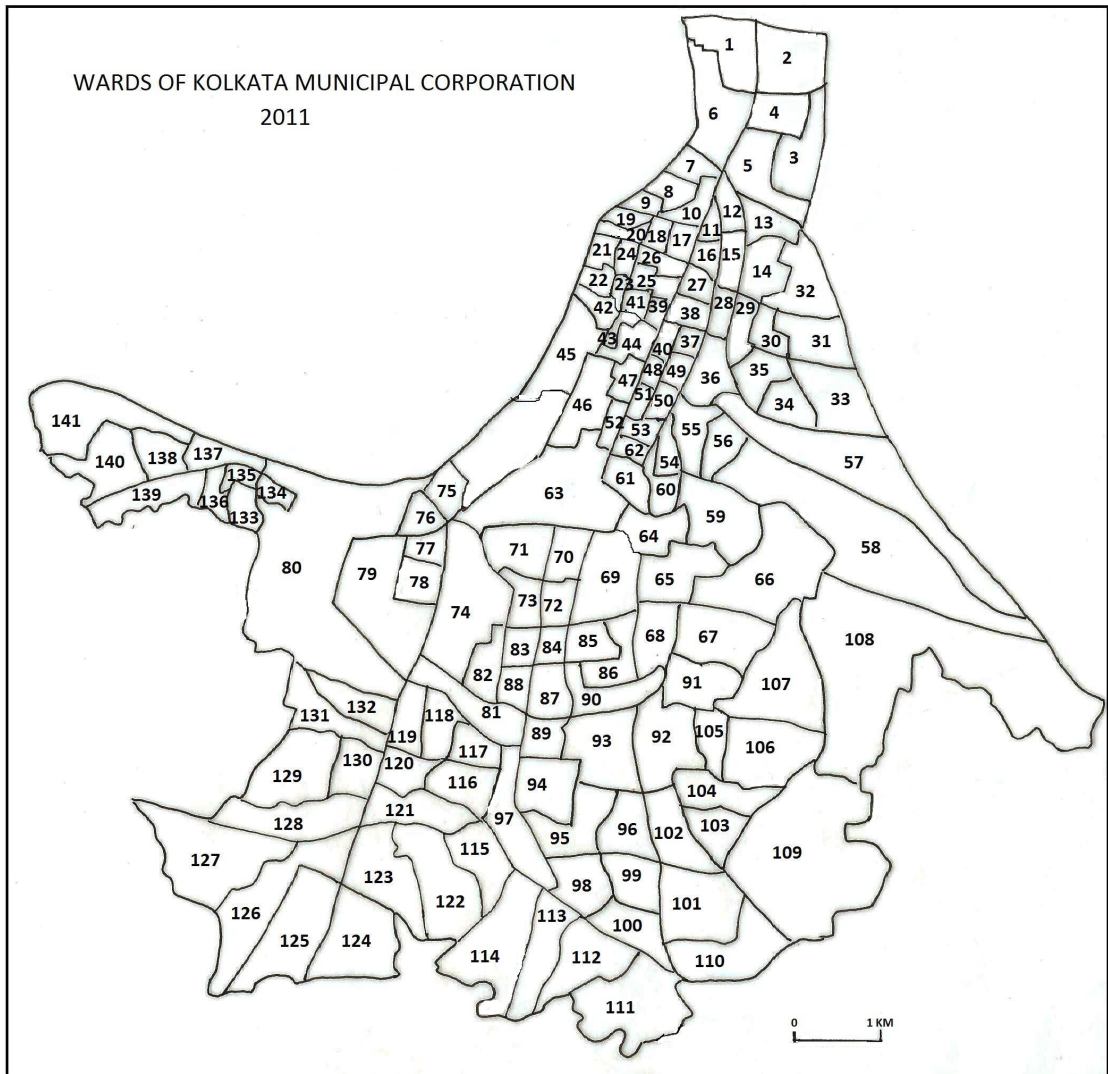

Figure 1. Kolkata Municipal Corporation and Its Wards
Source: Census of India 2001, Kolkata District Handbook.

areas added since 1984 is still growing. The core of the Kolkata metropolitan region, the KMC, displaying both decline and growth calls into question the hypothesis of 'overall metropolitan stagnation' put forward by the World Bank. The outer wards of the core city are still growing.

The magnitude of population decline in Kolkata city from 2001 to 2011 is shown in Figure 2 and it is spread over 80 wards or 56.7 per cent of the total. Central Kolkata has two wards, 45 and 46, where population decline has exceeded 4 per cent per annum in the last decade. In ward 45, the ward with the highest rate of decline of 4.53 per cent a year, population has fallen from 16,025 in 1991 to 8,394 in 2011. This ward and its immediate environs constitute the heart of the colonial central business district with a
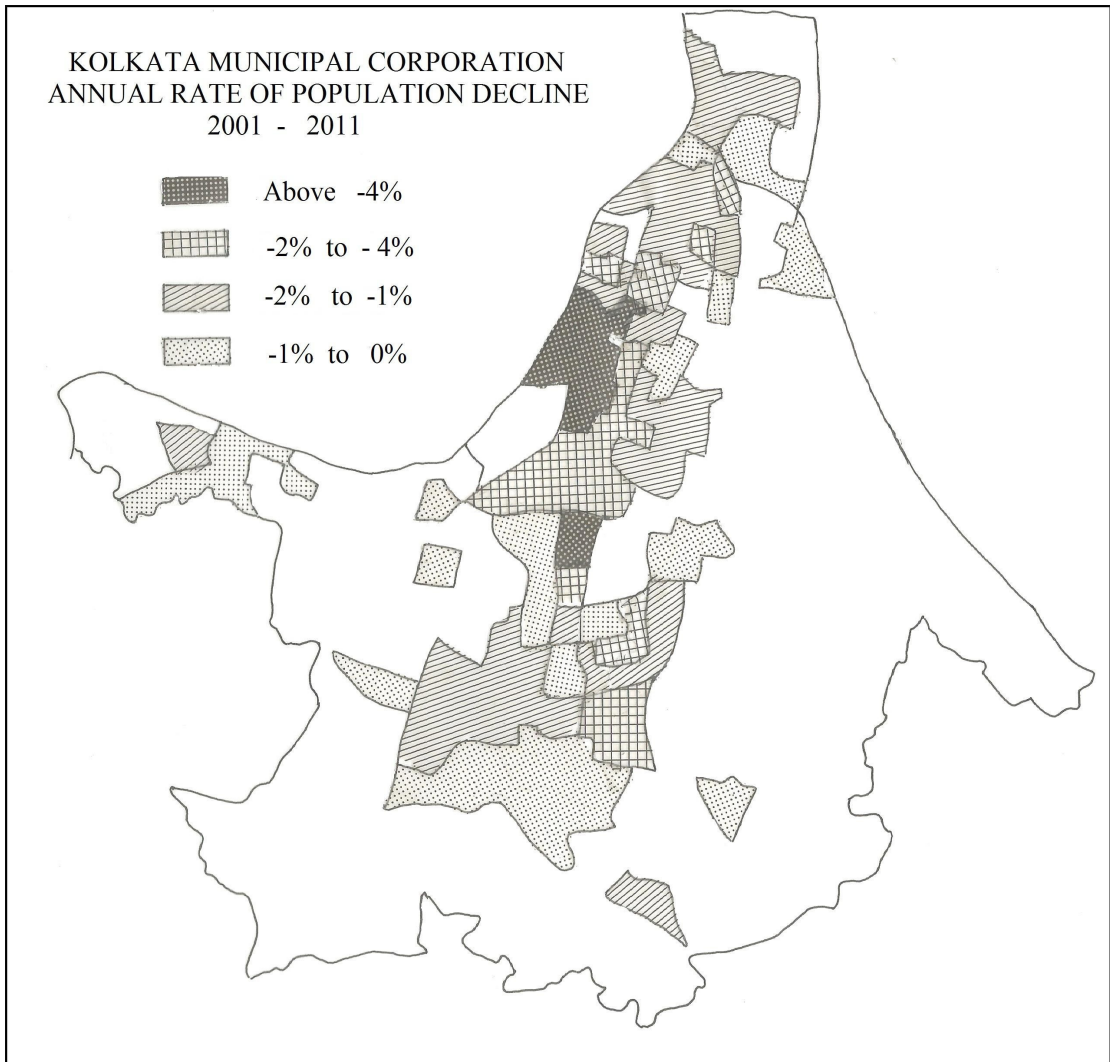

Figure 2. Kolkata Municipal Corporation—Population Decline, 2001–2011

Source: Census of India, 2001-Final Population Totals, West Bengal, Table 1, Census of India 2011 (censusindia.gov.in), primary census abstract data.

predominance of administrative and commercial activities and where residential population has been small. In the last two decades, an extension of commercial activities has further reduced the scope for residential occupation of land in ward 45 and adjacent wards. However, this explanation cannot be generalized to declining wards in the rest of the city. For instance, the indigenous business district located a little north in the area of Burrabazar-Bowbazar and covering wards 42 and 44 also shows declining population. The fall in population has been very sharp in the last decade, particularly in ward 43 or Jorasanko where the population has declined from 29,647 in 2001 to just 17,677 in 2011. This ward has also experienced an annual rate of decline of 4 per cent.

North Kolkata, in particular, wards along its western edge, flanking the river Hugli, show a wide-spread population decline. North of Bipin Behari Ganguly Street and Beliaghata Road, there are around 46 wards that could be taken to represent the oldest part of the city. Of these, 36 wards or 78 per cent have experienced a population loss during 1991–2011. What is interesting to note is the fact that many parts of south Kolkata are losing population as well. Well-known older residential areas, such as, Bhwanipur (wards 70 and 72), Kalighat (ward 83), Tollygunge (87) and Gariahat (wards 68 and 86) have experienced population loss of above 2 per cent a year during the last decade.

In attempting to understand the drivers of population decline, it should be pointed out that several of the declining areas have been steadily losing population since the 1980s. In north Kolkata, they include the neighbourhood of Paikpara (wards 4 and 5), the Sovabazar-Baghbazar neighbourhood (wards 8 and 9), Girish Park (ward 23) and College Street (ward 40). In central Kolkata, they include the Sealdah-Taltola area (wards 50, 51 and 53) and around Park Street (wards 61 and 63). In south Kolkata, they include Gariahat-Ballygunge (ward 68), Harish Mukherjee Road (wards 71, 72 and 73), Kolkata docks (ward 80), Chetla (wards 82 and 83) and Rash Behari Avenue (wards 85, 86, 87 and 88). Thus, their population loss predates the era of economic liberalization and could lie in more long-term factors.

The demographically growing areas within KMC are shown in Figure 3.

As shown in Figure 3, the outer wards of the city have been areas of high population growth during the last decade. The highest growth rates of over 6 per cent per annum have been experienced by wards 108 and 109 in the south-eastern part of the city. In ward 108, in the locality of Tiljala, population has increased from 18,326 in 1991 to 64,777 in 2011. Likewise, in the adjacent ward 109 of Purba Jadavpur, the growth during 2001 to 2011 has been at 7 per cent a year in the last decade. In the west, a part of Metiabruz (ward 141) has experienced a high growth rate of 3 per cent a year in the last decade. In the south, the locality known as Thakurpkur (wards 122–127) has also grown but at a lesser rate of above 1 per cent a year.

What is clearly discernible is the growth in the eastern and southern border wards of the city. This has much to do with the increasing accessibility of these areas, the availability of larger parcels of land and lower costs of land. The establishment and widening of a major arterial road, the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass and its east–west linkages via connector roads to important routes in the older parts of the city and the extension of the underground metro system to Garia in the south from Tollygunge, have considerably improved the accessibility of the eastern and south-eastern border wards to the rest of the city. The proximity of the airport to this area has made it attractive for the location of new and upcoming five-star hotels, hospitals, offices as well as upper income residential high rises.

Demographic Change in the KMA, 2001–2011

In the last 50 years, the different geographical constituents of the KMA have experienced different rates of urban growth and this is shown in Table 2. The core area comprising the KMC, with its higher population density, has clearly stagnated with its 2001–2011 growth rate of –1.67 per cent being the lowest of
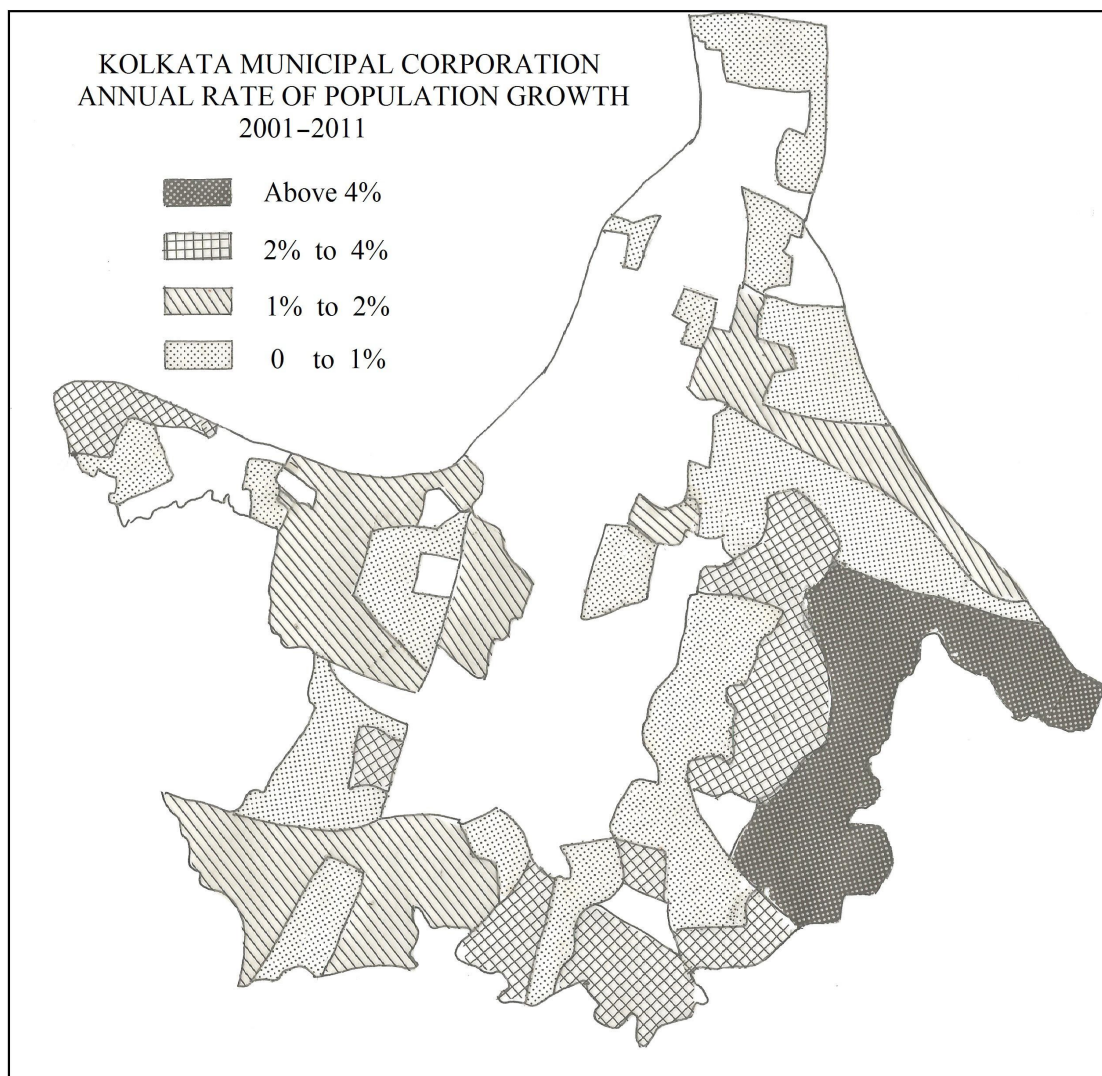
Figure 3. Kolkata Municipal Corporation—Growing Areas, 1991–2011

Source: Census of India, 2001-Final Population Totals, West Bengal, Table 1; Census of India 2011 from censusindia.gov.in, primary census abstract data.

Table 2. Annual Rates of Growth of Population in the KMA

	1951–1961	1961–1971	1971–1981	1981–1991	1991–2001	2001–2011*
KMA municipal bodies	2.1	2.2	1.1	2.92	2.69	0.64
Kolkata Municipal Corp.	0.80	0.80	0.45	0.63	0.41	–0.16
Howrah Municipal Corp.	1.8	4.4	0.09	2.72	0.60	0.64

Source: *Based on data taken from Census of India, 2011: Population Finder on website censusindai.gov.in
Growth rates for the years 1951–1961 to 1991–2001 have been taken from the CDP for Kolkata prepared by KMDA (2007, p. 11).

all the million-plus population cities in the country. The smaller municipal towns of the KMA, on the other hand, have continued to grow, but at a lower rate, in the last decade.

Just as in the case of the core area, the aggregate growth rate for the KMA municipal towns conceals considerable variations in growth. This is shown in Figure 4.
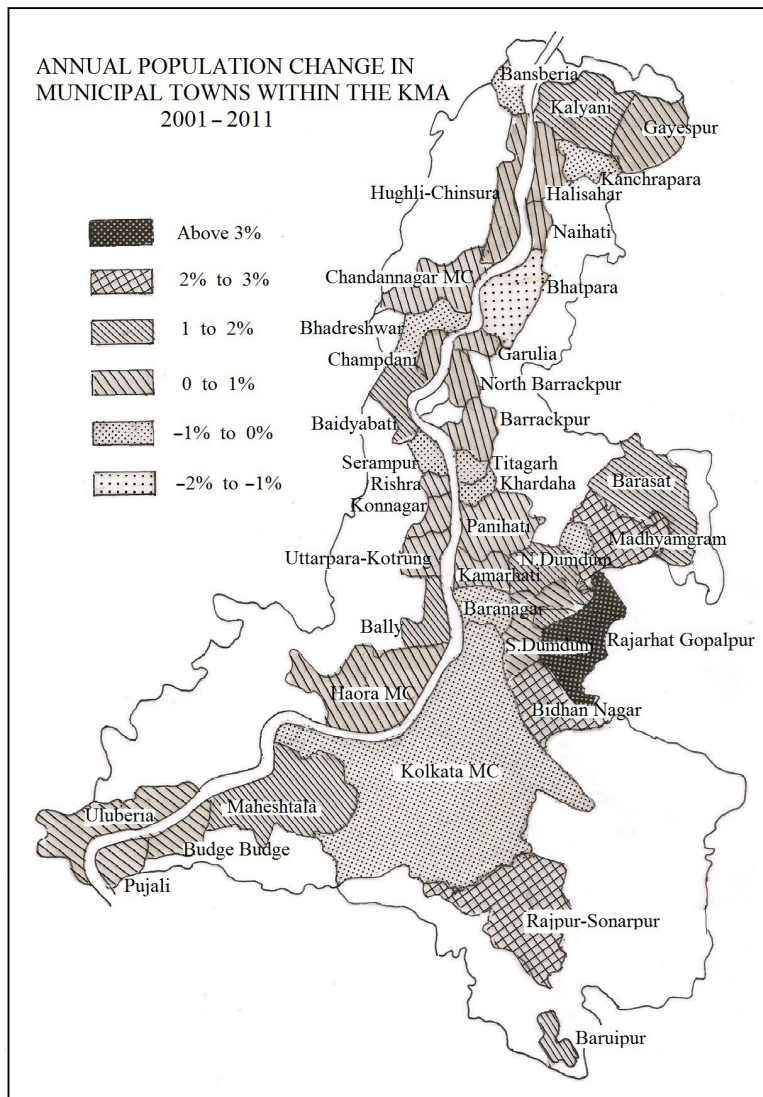

Figure 4. Kolkata Metropolitan Area: Demographic Change 2001–2011

The population of the municipal towns grew at around 0.64 per cent per annum in the last decade with stark variations. Nine of the 39 towns, namely, Kanchrapara, Bhatpara, Titagarh, Khardha, Baranagar,

Bansberia, Bhadreshwar, Serampore and New Barrackpore, have had negative growth rates. The continuing decline of the jute industry and lack of economic opportunities in the organized sector have clearly been a factor. On the eastern side of the metropolitan area, the municipal towns of Rajarhat-Gopalpur, Bidhan Nagar and Rajpur-Sonarpur have had the highest growth rates of 3.25 per cent, 2.38 per cent and 2.06 per cent a year, respectively, during 2001–2011 and reflect the development and construction activities associated with the newly emerging planned satellite city, New Town (Rajarhat), and that along the southern end of the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass.

Ward-level Study

While broadly the processes leading to decline and growth in the core city of Kolkata are known, they have been based on large data, such as, that of the census and the economic census. What actually happens to declining neighbourhoods and growing neighbourhoods and how they cope is not captured in such data and, hence, the need for more micro level studies. Out of KMC's 144 wards, two declining wards, namely, 8 and 9, and two growing wards, namely, 124 and 125, were selected for further study, the selection being made on the basis of the representative character of the wards and the availability of local contacts.

Declining Wards

The two selected declining wards, 8 and 9, are examined in more detail here, in particular, the area bounded by Jitendra Mohan Avenue to the east, Raja Nabo Krishna St to the south, Bagh Bazar Street to the north and the banks of the Hugli in the west. This is an old part of the city predating the arrival of the British and the founding of the city by Job Charnock in 1690. The area existed as a village, Sutanuti, the northern most of the three original villages upon which the city was founded. The area selected for study covers two old roads that date back to those times, namely, the north–south artery Rabindra Sarani or the old Chitpur road and the west–east Baghbazar Street.

In 2011, ward 8 had a total of 18,760 people. In 1981, its population was 26,203. Thus, in the course of the last three decades, this ward has lost 7,443 people lowering its density from 77,067 persons per sq. km to 55,176. With only 5.38 per cent of its population in the age group of 1–6 years, it is a neighbourhood where young children are less represented. With a sex ratio of 978 and non-workers accounting for 62 per cent of the population, approximately 88 per cent of its population is literate with 90 per cent of males and 86 per cent of its females being so. Street-level interviews with the local population were mostly with people in their middle ages or older. They had been born in the neighbourhood and had remained there.

Regarding economic activities, around 38.08 per cent of the population of ward 8 is in the workforce with 93.42 per cent of them being main workers and mostly (97 per cent) working in the service sector. Only 5.68 per cent of the total workers considered themselves to be marginal workers and the majority of them, both among men and women, were working in household industries for 3–6 months (Census of India, 2011). There is no major manufacturing activity in the area and local respondents to a survey included a retired lawyer, a local college teacher, a retired sweet shop owner, a retired commercial artist and his brother a retired post office worker, a photographer and a retired businessman. Besides these middle-class residents, there are 17 slum/*bustee* pockets in ward 8 with 5,674 people (KMC Slum Survey, 2009). These slums support a large number of domestic workers, day labourers and artisans. The latter

are concentrated in the slum of Kumartuli, renowned for its clay idol images. However, the above numbers exclude the homeless living on pavements, such as, along Raja Nabo Krishna Street.

The formal housing stock of the area is around 65–100 years old and largely consists of two-to-three storey single-family or joint-family houses displaying an array of vernacular and hybrid colonial styles. There has not been much building activity, particularly on streets that are off the main roads. Along the stretch of Raja Raj Ballav Street, a smaller street that connects the two north–south thoroughfares, Rabindra Sarani and Jitendra Mohan Avenue, there was just one new building. However, as typical of many north Kolkata streets, there are several smaller streets, that are more like pathways branching off from Raja Raj Ballav Street and along some of these there were a few new buildings. Overall, in the inner streets and the cul-de-sacs of residential areas, the housing stock has remained unchanged. Some have been repaired by second- and third-generation family members but those on rent are mostly in poor condition.

While the survey of local residents revealed satisfaction with living in the area and an awareness of its convenient location vis-à-vis access to markets and public transportation, such as, tram lines, buses and the city's metro system, there was also an awareness of the locality losing population and particularly the young. They have to leave for good jobs and most do not return to the old neighbourhood to settle. This has as much to do with the break-up of the joint family and the greater suitability of a flat/apartment for a nuclear family as with the perceived difficulties of maintaining an old home with its worn out service systems, parking a car in the narrow lanes of the neighbourhood and avoiding waterlogging during the rains. Hence, as observed by Bose (2012, p. 76), 'the modern aspiration of urban living in tune with globalization and the scale of amenity offered by the consumer industries is not fulfilled by living in such historic areas'. Closed and boarded houses on streets or large houses with just an elderly couple are the results of such choices. It is very likely that these areas will continue to show declining population unless some economic magnets emerge within these areas making them attractive as workplaces or as tourism locales.

During the latter part of the Left Front government's rule, in 2007, an attempt was made to economically revive parts of north Kolkata through small schemes, such as, the redevelopment of Kumartoli, the famous clay idol makers' village in ward 8 via a ₹22 crore project funded under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) and executed by Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA) (Banerjee, 2010). After the change in government, the project languished and the initial start that was made has been reversed and the artisans remain as they were (Adhikari, 2012; Basu, 2011).

Growing Wards

As an example of growing wards, wards 124 and 125 in Thakurpukur were studied in detail. These wards are located in the south-western edge of the KMC along an important north–south artery of traffic, Diamond Harbor Road, and are larger in geographical area. The locality was incorporated into Kolkata city only in 1984 and even in the mid-1990s had a semi-rural ambience with many ponds and low-rise single-family housing and small businesses (Shaw & Pandit, 2001). In the last two decades, both wards have experienced high average annual growth rates of 2.3 per cent and 2.4 per cent, respectively. In 1991, the population of ward 124 was 26,556 and this increased to 39,179 in 2011. Thus, 12,623 people have been added to the ward in the last 20 years and likewise 14,834 have been added to ward 125. Their population densities have steadily increased from 11,349 and 11,959, respectively, in 1991 to 16,743 and 17,868 per sq. km, respectively, in 2011. However, they are still less congested compared to the old wards of the north and have scope for more infilling.

Another interesting contrast is the more balanced distribution of men and women in the total population. In fact, in ward 124, females currently outnumber males and the ward in 2011 had a sex ratio of 1,024 females per 1,000 males. This attests to the type of migration the city's fringe areas have experienced, which is largely family migration from adjacent areas or from other areas within the state. This is in contrast to the clusters of long distance male migrants, such as, those from Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh (UP) who are to be found in the *bustees*/slums of the older wards of the north. The population in the fringe wards is also relatively younger with a larger proportion of children. For instance, children in the age group of 0–6 years comprise 7.25 per cent of the population in ward 124 indicating the relative youthfulness of the population as compared to ward 8. Interestingly, there is also a higher proportion of Scheduled Castes who comprise 17.75 per cent of the population in ward 124. 85.84 per cent of the population is literate.

Regarding economic activities, 37.79 per cent of the population is in the workforce and 82.55 per cent of them are main workers in ward 124. Furniture workshops, garages, clothes and home furnishing stores, medical stores, photocopy and stationary shops, sweet shops, tea stalls and construction material stores line the sides of Diamond Harbor Road. This is still an urbanizing area with active building and road construction underway. The Joka to BBD Bag line of the metro rail is under construction over Diamond Harbor Road and while this has created some bottlenecks in transportation, it has also boosted land values in the area, making it even more attractive to the real estate sector. In addition, until its amalgamation with the KMC in 1984, the locality did not have a networked sewer system. KMC's sewer system served wards 1–100 only. This deficiency was addressed in 2007–2008 when the government was given a low-interest loan by the Asian Development Bank for environmental improvement of the city.

Other than a few institutional establishments, such as, Vivekananda College, buildings in the area are fairly new. The older private housing stock in the area comprised largely of single-family homes of one or two storey with a garden or pond has gradually given way to multi-family apartments. This process began in the 1990s and has continued since then with housing construction still ongoing in many parts of the two wards and particularly along major roads, such as, Diamond Harbor Road and James Long Sarani. Most of the housing units are "ground plus four storey" buildings with parking on the ground floor. Several large format high-rise residential complexes have also been developing on Diamond Harbor Road, such as, Genex Valley.

Conclusion

The continuing spread of the largest Indian cities has resulted in complex metropolitan systems with contrasting core areas and peripheral areas. In Kolkata, the core area consisting of the oldest wards of the city has old infrastructure and housing stock and without an economic magnet is becoming a declining residential area with an older population. The newer outer areas of the city, on the other hand, are still undergoing active residential infilling and population growth. Their infrastructure, roads, sewer system, police stations and police outposts are still in the process of being built.

An urban policy that simultaneously takes into consideration the challenges of these two contrasting types of areas within the city is clearly needed. Further densification of the older areas through residential high rises may be counterproductive as they already have high population densities. Their economic revival would be a better option. As in the West, the older areas could be promoted to showcase their history and sense of the past. Historic conservation of the core along with the creation of key employment magnets that highlight the cultural past of the older neighbourhoods, such as, museums of art and

culture could be envisioned. Improved tourist access to the many interesting lanes and by-lanes of the old north via walking tours is slowly starting to take off in Kolkata as are private efforts to promote the area's heritage through the formation of heritage trusts. For instance, the newly formed Ahiritola-Sutanuti Heritage Trust held a cultural festival 'Ahiratala-SutanutiUtsav' on 23 March 2014 (*The Telegraph*, 24 March 2014) and India Foundation for the Arts, organized a two day festival entitled 'Chitpur Local-Celebrating a Heritage' on 20 and 21 March 2015. Such efforts would need to be supplemented with improved public services, such as, better solid waste management.

In the newer wards, the timely completion of road, rail and sewerage projects is important as is the need to create housing for all income groups.

Improving and upgrading slums and squatter settlements and creating social facilities, such as, schools and medical centres are needed here. Finally, using all available non-residential land now under obsolete uses, such as, derelict warehouses and redeveloping them to provide services or as sites for new economic activities would benefit the entire city.

Acknowledgment

Notes

1. While the Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation grew during 2001–2011, the older part or island city has lost population.
2. Source: (www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/outside_jsp/Incorporation_erstwhile_Joka.jsp). Recently, the geographical area of the KMC was extended by the addition of Joka Panchayat 1 and 2, located in the south-western edge of the city. They are now wards 142, 143 and 144 of the KMC. The official map of KMC (as displayed in its website), however, does not yet show these new wards.

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