

Urbanization In Assam: Its Impact On Socio-Economic Development And Environment

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Abstract

Urbanization is the process of transformation through which cities develop, and higher percentages of the population come to live in the city or urban area. Urbanization has a positive impact in the path of development. According to World Bank estimation, more than 80% of global GDP generates in cities. Urbanization can contribute to sustainable growth through increased productivity and innovation if managed well. During 2011 census, Assam has an urbanization rate of 14% approximate which is lower compared to 31% of national urbanization rate. This paper intends to study the trend of urbanization in Assam over the years and the rate of growth of urban population. It also seeks to study the impact of urbanization on socio economic development and environment. The findings show that there is an increasing trend in the rate of growth of urbanization. Proper management and planning is required to induce organised and sustainable economic development and to protect the environment from degradation.

Keywords: Development, Environment, Population, Urbanization

INTRODUCTION:

Urbanization is a process that involves the multiplication of points of population concentration as well as increase in the size individual concentration. Urbanization is a result of three major components. They are: a) natural increase of population, b) increase of population due to migration, and c) appearance of new urban centres. Unemployment, non-availability of socio-economic facilities and services and low level of income are push factors that make the people to move to major urban centres in search of employment and livelihood. Labour demand for the development of economic activities and service centres in the towns and cities works as pull factors for the growth of urban population. Urbanization is a continuous and complex process. The secondary and tertiary economic sectors gain importance which may increase the large number of shift of population from the primary sector.

There are three major concepts of urbanization. They are: behavioural, structural and demographic concepts. The behavioural concept is concerned with experience of individual over time. The structural concept is related to activities and changes in economic structure. The demographic concept is primarily concerned with population concentrations. Urbanization is a revolutionary change in the whole pattern of social life which is the result of basic economic and technical developments (Davis, 1962). The positive association between urbanization and per capita income is one of the most obvious and striking “stylized facts” of the development process. Generally, highly developed countries are measured on the basis of their per capita income and share of population living in urban areas (Todaro & Smith).

According to UN estimates, the urban population of the world has increased rapidly from 751 million in 1950 to 4.2 billion in 2018. Asia despite its relatively lower level of urbanization, is the home of 54 percent of the world's urban population, followed by Europe and Africa with 13 percent each. Presently 55 percent of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion of which is expected to increase to 68 percent by 2050.

STUDY AREA:

The present study covers the state of Assam which is located in between 22°19' to 28°16' North Latitude and 89°42' to 96°30' East Longitude. The state covers an area of about 78438 Sq Km. It has a total population of 31205576 (Census, 2011). The total rural population is 26807034 and urban population is 4398542. Percentage of urban population is 14.10%. There are 35 districts, 25372 inhabited villages and 214 towns in the state of Assam.

OBJECTIVES:

The main objective of the study are:

1. To study the process of urbanization in the state of Assam.
2. To analyse the urbanization trends and level of urban population in Assam from 1971 to 2011 and levels of district development.
3. To study the impact of urbanization on socio-economic development and environment in Assam.

METHODOLOGY:

Descriptive research method is followed in this study. The study is based on secondary data collected from Census of India; and Statistical Handbooks of Assam published by Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Assam. Simple statistical techniques have been adapted to bring out relationship between levels of urbanization and district development and regional development. The classifications of towns have been carried out according to Census categorization of towns.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Datta, P. (2006) in the paper titled "Urbanization in India" described urbanization as mainly a product of demographic explosion and poverty induced rural-urban migration. Rapid urbanization leads to massive growth of slum followed by misery, poverty, unemployment, inequalities, exploitation, and degradation in the quality of urban life.

Srikrishna, G. (2017) in the paper "A study on urbanization in India – issues and challenges" pointed that urban areas, especially in the metropolitan cities, people of extremely divergent cultures live together. This has a positive impact. People come to know about each other's culture and they exchange their ideas, breaking the barriers which earlier used to exist between them. This results in cultural hybridization.

Jaysawal, N. and Saha, S. (2014) in their paper titled "Urbanization in India: An impact assessment" have suggested that policy should be related to proper urban planning where city planning will consist of operational, developmental and restorative planning. Operational planning should take care of improvement of urban infrastructure like roads, traffic, transport, etc.

Todaro & Smith, (2015) found that urban population growth in the developing world is far more rapid than population growth generally; about half the urban growth is accounted for by migrants from rural areas. Unchecked urbanization of the developing world is placing a strain on infrastructure and public health and threatens social stability. About half of the urban labour force works in the informal sector of low-skilled, low productivity, often self-employed jobs in petty sales and services. Still this sector may generate up to a third of urban income and features a low capital intensity, low-cost training, waste recycling, and employment creation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Urbanization in Assam:

The criteria adopted in 1961 Census for an area to be treated as urban are:

1. All places with a Municipality, Corporation Cantonment Board or Notified Town Area.
2. All other places which satisfied the following criteria:
 - a) A minimum population of 5,000.
 - b) At least 75% of the male working population engaged in non-agricultural (and allied) economic pursuit.
 - c) A density of population of at least 400 per square KM (1000 per square mile).

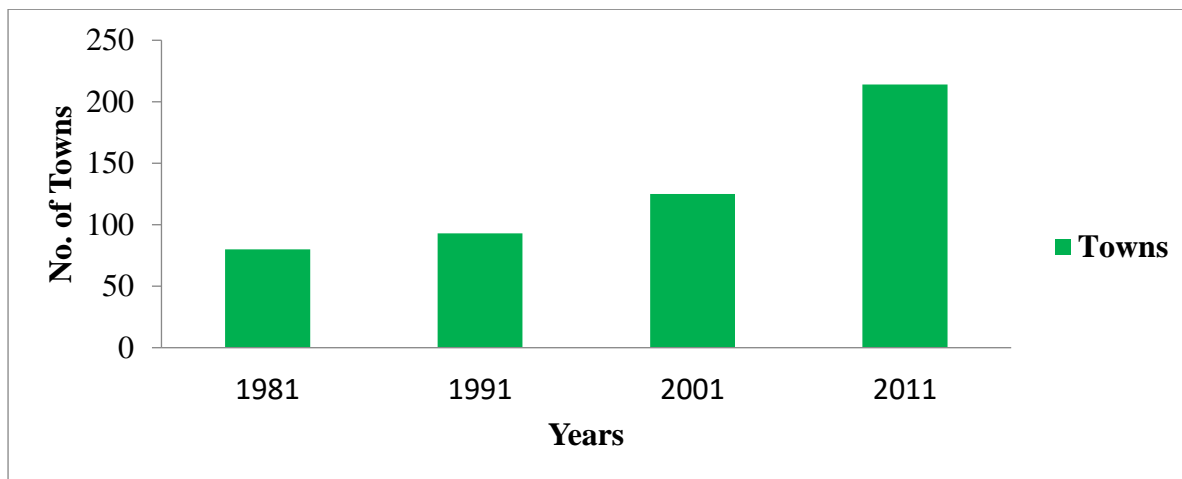
Table 1: Number of towns in Assam

1981		1991		2001		2011			
Name of districts	towns	Name of districts	towns	Name of districts	towns	Name of districts	towns		
Goalpara	16	Goalpara	2	Goalpara	3	Goalpara	11		
Kamrup	16	Kamrup	7	Kamrup	9	Kamrup	16		
Darrang	7	Darrang	4	Darrang	4	Kamrup Metro	12		
Lakhimpur	3	Lakhimpur	2	Lakhimpur	2	Darrang	3		
Dibrugarh	11	Dibrugarh	6	Dibrugarh	9	Lakhimpur	4		
Sivsagar	10	Sivsagar	5	Sivsagar	5	Dibrugarh	9		
Nagaon	7	Nagaon	7	Nagaon	10	Sivsagar	4		
Karbi Anglong	2	Karbi Anglong	6	Karbi Anglong	6	Nagaon	8		
NC Hills	1	NC Hills	3	NC Hills	4	Karbi Anglong	5		
Cachar	7	Cachar	2	Cachar	7	Cachar	19		
		Dhubri	7	Dhubri	8	Dhubri	9		
		Kokrajhar	3	Kokrajhar	4	Kokrajhar	4		
		Bongaigaon	5	Bongaigaon	5	Bongaigaon	5		
		Barpeta	7	Barpeta	7	Barpeta	9		
		Nalbari	2	Nalbari	2	Nalbari	11		
		Sonitpur	4	Sonitpur	6	Sonitpur	6		
		Dhemaji	1	Dhemaji	3	Dhemaji	4		
		Morigaon	3	Morigaon	2	Morigaon	6		
		Golaghat	3	Golaghat	6	Golaghat	7		
		Jorhat	3	Jorhat	7	Jorhat	11		
		Tinsukia	6	Tinsukia	10	Tinsukia	13		
		Karimganj	3	Karimganj	3	Karimganj	7		
		Hailakandi	2	Hailakandi	3	Hailakandi	3	Hailakandi	3
						Dima Hasao	4	Dima Hasao	4
Baksa	2					Baksa	2		
Udalguri	3					Udalguri	3		
Biswanath	2					Biswanath	2		
Charaideo	3	Charaideo	3						
Hojai	9	Hojai	9						
Majuli	0	Majuli	0						
South Salmara	0	South Salmara	0						
West Karbi Anglong	2	West Karbi Anglong	2						
Chirang	3	Chirang	3						
Total	80	Total	93	Total	125	Total	214		

Source: Census of India

*1981 Census was not held in Assam, the data of 1981 are collected from Town Directory, Assam (Census of India, 1981).

Figure 1: Decadal Growth of Towns in Assam (1981-2011)



Source: Census of India

The decadal increase in towns shows that, during 1971 there were about 74 towns in the state of Assam which has increased to 80 in the 1981. As the 1981 census was not held in Assam, the non-census data for the towns of Assam had been obtained from the Municipal Authorities for the municipal towns. For other towns the data for towns has been collected from the concerned local authorities and/or from offices of Deputy Commissioners and Sub-divisional Officers. During 1991, there are about 93 towns in Assam. The number of towns increases to 125 during 2001 census and to 214 during 2011 census. At present, among the districts of Assam, Cachar has the highest number of towns with 19 followed by Kamrup with 16.

Relative Increase or Decrease in Number of Towns:

The relative increase or decrease in towns shows an increase of 16.25% in the number of towns from 1981 to 1991. During 1991 and 2001 there is an increase in the number of towns by 32 which is a relative increase of about 34.40%. Again during 2001 and 2011, there was a tremendous increase in the rate as the relative increase is 71.20%.

Table 2: Trend of urban population in Assam (1971-2011)

Year	Population	Growth rate	Rural Population		Urban Population	
			Percentage	Decadal Growth	Percentage	Decadal Growth
1971	14625152	34.95	91.18	32.62	8.82	65.01
1981	18041248	23.36	90.12	21.92	9.88	38.25
1991	22414322	53.26	88.9	22.56	11.10	39.58
2001	26655528	18.92	87.10	16.51	12.90	36.24
2011	31205576	17.07	85.90	15.47	14.10	27.89

Source: Census of India

*The population figure for 1981 for Assam is inter-populated.

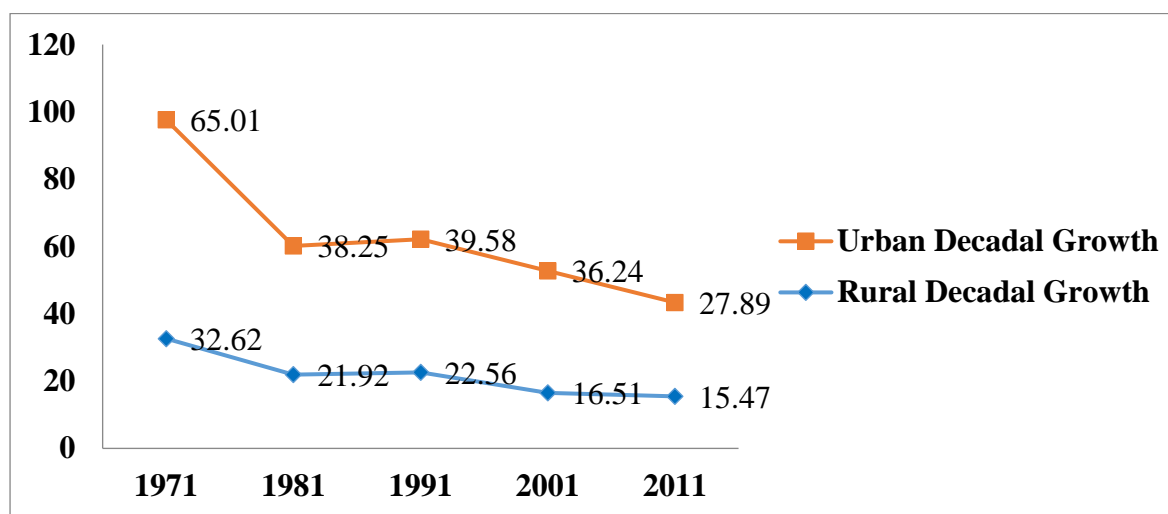
The urban population in 1971 was 1,289,222 which accounts to 8.82% of the total population of Assam. Among the 11 districts, Kamrup district has the highest urban population of 250,635. The minimum urban population of 5,197 has been noticed in North Cachar Hills. During 1991 the total urban population of Assam was 2,487,795 which accounts to 11.10% of the total population of Assam. Kamrup district has again witnessed maximum

number of urban populations of 655,215. However, the minimum urban population of 8,891 is found in Dhemaji district.

During 2001 the total urban population in Assam was 3,439,240 which accounts to 12.90% of total population. The maximum urban population of 908,217 is found in Kamrup district. The minimum urban population of 37,988 is found in Morigaon district. During 2011 the total urban population in Assam state was 4,398,542 which accounts to 14.10% of total population. The maximum urban population of 1,037,011 was found in Kamrup Metro district which is 82.9%. The minimum urban population of 12,242 was found in Baksa district which was 1.3%.

The detailed study of the state from 1971-2011 provides that the growth of urban population in Assam is about 3,109,320. The relative increase of towns from 1971 to 2011 is about 241.18%. Among the districts, the maximum growth of urban population is in Kamrup district.

Figure 2: Decadal growth of rural and urban population (in percentage)



Source: Census of India

The insight view of the decadal growth of population from figure 2 reveals that from the second half of the 20th century, the state has witnessed a continuous declining trend in the rate of growth of population both in the rural and urban areas except for 1991. The decadal growth of urban population has shown a sharp decline from 1971 to 1981. However further decades has not witnessed any major observable declination. But from 2001 to 2011 the growth rate has decreases from 38.24% to 27.89%. Similarly, the rural decadal population growth rate shows that the state has faced a dramatical decrease in the population growth rate from 1971 to 1981. From a decadal growth rate of 32.62% in 1971, the growth rate has decreases to 15.47% in 2011 in rural areas of Assam. The declining urban population is may be due to the geographical location and climatic condition of the state. Due to its geographical backwardness the business and commercial link with the other states develops steadily (Raji, 2020).

Urbanization and Socio-Economic development:

During 2011 census, Assam has an urbanization rate of 14% while urbanization at All India level during 1951 had a rate of 17%. At present, the rate of urbanization in India is 31%. Therefore, Assam is lagging behind in urbanisation compared to All India level. This low rate of urbanization has an impact on the development of the state. The process of urbanization can have a positive transformative force which results in sustainable development, including curbing the inequality. Properly planned and managed urbanization can improve employment opportunities and quality of life which in turn can reduce poverty and inequality. Urbanization can facilitate access to education and decent employment for all urban residents. Urbanization has a positive impact on housing, infrastructure and transportation networks which are the key to spatial connectivity and economic inclusion. Urbanization provides for the access to new technologies and various technological know-how, which ensures raising incomes and the development of individuals. Urbanization paves the way for individuals to contact

with the labour market. People adjusts to match the work market, specializing in the requirements of working fields and thus framing and adaptation, as well as earning to cover every day needs.

The social consequences of urbanization are seen in the concept of family. It has been often seen a decline in the concept of family with rise in urbanization through the proliferation of less traditional forms. With increase in urbanization, the labour force participation of women gets higher. Women even became decision makers who have had to balance professional responsibilities with the family responsibilities.

However, urbanization also has some negative impacts in the socio-economic lives of the individuals. In the rapid growth path of the Economy of Assam, infrastructure facilities are the bottlenecks that may crumble in near future without proper measurements (Raji, 2020). The density of people living in urban areas is high. So there arises the acute shortage of housing in urban areas and much of the available accommodation is qualitatively of sub-standard. High density of population also creates the problem of overcrowding. Unplanned expansion of town areas creates the problem of water supply, drainage and sewage, and sanitation. Absence of planned and adequate arrangements for traffic and transport is another problem of urbanization.

Urbanization and its Impact on Environment:

The environmental implications of rapid urbanization are subsequently negative and it has serious consequences on natural habitat. Studies found that urbanization and loss of green field areas are highly correlated, which resulted to severe ecological crisis (Raji, 2020). Urbanization is a continuous process which reflects shift in the traditional way of living i.e., primitive agricultural practices, to a more industrious and mass productive or commercial goods (ibid). This attracts migration from the rural areas further creates population pressure on environment.

One of the inevitable consequences of urbanization is the deterioration of the environmental quality (Raji, 2020). Air pollution has been the major environmental issues in urban areas. Air pollution mainly comes from the emissions of industries and vehicles which are largely concentrated in urban areas. This is posing serious health risks to the urban residents. Pollutant from urban industry can decline in the health of urban aquatic ecosystem. Expansion of town areas can degrade the forest areas which are nearby to the urban areas. It may have negative effects on the ecosystem and can create problems like shortage of food supplies to wild habitat, increase of temperature in that particular region. Apart from that, overcrowding and excessive vehicles can create the problem of noise pollution. According to UNICEF, because of poor sanitary conditions and water contamination lakhs of urban children die or suffer from diarrhoea, tetanus, measles etc.

CONCLUSION:

From the analysis of process of urbanization in Assam from 1981-2011 it is noticed that there is an increased in the number of towns from 80 to 214. The relative increase over the thirty years is about 167.5%. The number of urban population during 1971 was 1,289,222 and it increases to 4,398,542. The relative increase over the fifty years is about 241.18%. Kamrup district has the highest progress in terms of urbanization. However, in 2011 census the All India urban population rate is about 31%, but the urbanization rate of Assam is just about 14%. So it can be seen that Assam is lagging behind the process of urbanization compared to the national level. The urban prospects and problems are because of migration and over-urbanization, industrial growth, lack of interest and inefficiency of the administration and defective town planning. Solutions to urban problems lie in systematic development of urban centres and creation of job opportunities, regional planning along with city planning, encouraging industries to move to backward areas, and adopting a pragmatic Housing Policy and structural decentralisation of local self-government itself.

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