Chapter X

An Overview of the Changes and Development of the Area

The study area is the most urbanised and industrialised region in the country. Many factors have combined to bring about this concentration of people and industries. It is not possible to present the forces and processes which have contributed to the growth of the region as well as the trends of growth and present characteristics in a nutshell, but the salient features have been outlined below.

The geographical location has not only been a basic asset to the region but also one of the most enduring ones. Situated on the Western coast of India, in a region furrowed by numerous creeks, a number of port cities have flourished through historic times. Later Bombay rose to prominence as the nearest port of call for the traffic of the Suez Canal and the most convenient port for vessels from the Cape. Its physical location has therefore helped to counteract the disadvantages of a hot humid and enervating climate which contrasted unfavourably with the milder and more salubrious climate of the eastern node, Poona. The Sah-yadris have also been of vital influence to the region both climatically as well for the generation of hydroelectric power which facilitated the development of large scale industries and a megapolitan type of economy in the region. However the forest resources have not been developed. Except for Matheran and Lonavala which have developed as hill stations,
the immense potential they hold as an economically lucrative national resource for tourism remains essentially unexploited. The forest areas remain largely inhabited by tribals who retain the most primitive culture almost in juxtaposition with the most developed, modern and affluent sections of the country.

Historically, it has been observed that during the early days accessibility, safety from floods, fertile terrain and local availability of water were the major factor affecting the growth of towns. During the medieval period, defence and commerce were the dominant forces of urbanisation. Today, industries emerge as the most potent force stimulating city growth. Thana and Kalyan which have had an almost identical history of growth differ today in that the latter city lacks a strong industrial base. Again Panvel which till 1961 had a growth rate comparable to similar towns in Maharashtra, has shown an increase in its growth rate during the current decade due to increased industrial activity in the town. Even Dombivili, a dormitory suburb, has sustained growth due to industrial activity in the surrounding region.

One of the major impacts of urbanisation has been the rapid expansion of the area under non-agricultural land uses. Though the land actually occupied by urban uses adds up to only a small part of the total area, it holds the vast majority of people, dwellings and places of work. With each decade, there is observed an acceleration in the rate of conversion, suggesting thereby the increasing dynamism in the pace of urban development. Moreover since 1961, the growth has been observed to be more widespread. The pattern has evolved from a random one to a uninodeal one concentrated around Bombay, followed in recent decades by a distinct
bi-polar pattern of land use change. The two dominant categories of land use are residential and industrial which account for over 94 percent of the area involved in the transformation from agricultural to non-agricultural uses. The other three categories of land use namely, Commerce, Public Utility and Other non-agricultural uses show a consistently low percentage of land converted.

Contrary to expectations the change in land use does not show a strong correlation with population increase and the index of urbanisation, questioning thereby the rational of using figures of population growth as indicators of alteration in land use for land zoning as is the practice for most of the development projects undertaken by the planning authorities in our country.

The growth of industries have contributed significantly to the spectacular growth of the region. Contrary to the experience of other cities in developing countries, manufacturing employment has held up well in comparison with the other sectors in the cities of the region. The study area accounts for 91 percent of the State’s productive capital, 86 percent of the gross output and 92 percent of the value added in manufacturing. Though the majority of the industries in the region are still concentrated in Greater Bombay the other industrial centres are assuming greater importance in recent years. A characteristic feature of the industrial development after 1960 has been the emergence of a number of new industrial townships and villages. However since the industrial growth in the region has mainly taken place only since the last twenty years the process of diversification
of industries in the different centres has not yet set in. The region is still in a transitional stage and the pattern of industrial development has not yet crystallised.

There is observed a redistribution of population in the study area during recent years. The settlements in the coastal region are essentially smaller in size compared to those on the plateau. However, Bombay a small fishing hamlet of yesterday, today alone accounts for over 65 percent of the total population in the region. The forces of agglomeration have resulted in the growth of a number of urban settlements in the vicinity of the metropolis. The coastal region today therefore holds the majority of the population in the region. Poona emerges as a smaller node at the other extremity. Urbanisation is thus an important factor in determining the distribution of settlements in the different population groups. It is only where the level of urbanisation is low that agricultural productivity and relief play an important role in determining the size of settlements.

The growth rate of the towns in the area is higher than the rate of increase of the population of rural settlements. In addition tehsils with higher urbanisation indices have higher growth rates than the tehsils with low indices. High growth rates are also closely linked to occupational structure and accessibility. Though the larger sized settlements do have higher growth rates, population size alone has little control over growth rates.

In the beginning of the century, urbanisation was but incipient in the region, and the lack of integration of the rural population with in an urban network resulted in a hiatus in the development of the metropoles on the one hand and the smaller urban centres on the other. After 1941, the commercial and industrial development in the region has been marked
by an increase in the number and size of higher order towns. The earlier primate pattern is thus slowly evolving into a hierarchical arrangement of towns.

The dominant activity of the majority of urban places is industry, though places which have the highest degree of specialisation are the defence towns which have other services as their dominant character. The specialisation index tends to diminish with size suggesting that with an increase in population the centres have a more diversified occupational character.

The growth rates of the towns is linked closely with occupational structure. Industrial centres have experienced the maximum growth during both 1951-61 and 1961-71, whereas for all other functional types of centres the growth rate has decreased during 1961-71. Population size is a factor influencing the growth rate of cities below one hundred thousand while distance of a town from Bombay or Poona and the economic potential excercises little control over growth rates.

The nature of linkages and relationships of the cities suggests that as a city grows in size, not only does the areal extent of the hinterland increase, particularly in the case of higher order hinterlands, but the level of interaction between a larger city and its immediate hinterland is considerably greater than in the case of the smaller city. The functional character of the central city is the major factor influencing the extent of its zone of influence. The hinterlands of industrial centres unlike those of other services do not grow in proportion to their own size after large scale development has occurred.
at the centre. The absence of central place functions in these centres greatly restricts the extent of their hinterlands. Hence, the potential of industry in regional planning as an agent for stimulating and spreading growth remains rather limited. Other factors crucial in determining the extent of the hinterland are the spacing of centres, nature of the hinterland, population density of the hinterland and the transport facilities available.

The distance decay analysis signifying the levels of interaction of the two nodes along the major road and rail arteries reveals a rapid decline in the gradients of the various socio-economic parameters within a short distance from the city centre. The zone of intense interaction does not exceed 70 km. for Bombay whereas, for Poona it extends only upto 40 km. In the study region the zone of interaction is consistently greater along the railway than along the road. Not only is the carrying capacity of the railways greater but it is also cheaper than road travel. The cost factor is of immense significance in an economically backward country. The importance of the railways in the region is further reinforced as the suburban network is well developed.

The laying of the major trunk routes in the region initiated the economic growth of the area and has not only contributed considerably to the growth of the two nodes, Bombay and Poona but also to the growth of the intermodal centres located along the road and railway axes. The feeder network at the centres in the intermodal belt, along the main on line nodes, however is still in the preliminary stages,
with the result that lateral interconnection is yet to be completed. The network which is still axial in nature has surpassed its optimum transport capacity at the present development level. This is particularly true for the Bombay region as may be seen from the network density per 1000 people as well as from an analysis of the traffic flow for the railways in the region.

The precedence of intercity and interregional connections and needs of transport over local needs has developed what one may call a "corridor effect" in the study area. Transport between Bombay and Poona has developed a string of towns and industries, but the hinterland of this axial zone remains undeveloped. Transport serves only the larger centres and the distribution of goods and services between them. This is because transport is a linear process whereas development required wide areal diffusion. Transport lines do not enter tribal, hill or even other agricultural areas. Thus though in a very large universe transport may appear to cause a diffusion effect, viewed in a smaller regional back ground, the effect remains confined to a linear zone.

A review of the case studies reveals that though the initial growth of towns was affected by centripetal forces which produced a concentric growth pattern, the later development was towards the peripheral zones and was oriented towards the major arteries of transport, resulting in a sectoral form of development. This phase has been accompanied by a distinct zonation of functions. Though residences and industries have reciprocated positively to the centrifugal forces operative
today, the commercial areas are the least amenable to
dispersal and the old market centres still control the maximum
share of the business activities. Today industries occupy the major
portion of the developed areas particularly in the newer cities.
This is in contrast to the pattern observed in most Indian
cities where residences occupy more than 47 percent of the
total developed area.

The rapid pace of industrialisation during recent years
has resulted in large scale immigration into the region and
the development of large slum colonies. In most of the cities
slums account for 10 to 15 percent of the population of the
city. These hutment colonies also called 'jhopadpattis' lack
the basic amenities and are the breeding grounds for disease and
crime. Dharavi (Greater Bombay) Asia's largest slum also has the
highest crime rate. Ironically, not only the congested older
cities have a large slum population (40% of Bombay's population
are slum dwellers) but also the new fast growing towns in the
intermodal region. These towns having low population densities
nevertheless have an acute housing shortage. Ambernath, for
example with a gross density of only 12.4 persons per acre has
a slum population which is 57 percent of its 1971 population.
Thus slums do not result only from over crowing or dearth of
space but also from availability of space. The occupants of the
slums are essentially the unskilled labourers who are not
provided accommodation by the industrial companies, nor can
they raise the capital to acquire accommodation available for in
the market. With little money to spare for commutation, they
organise their own makeshift accommodation on the nearest open
space as close to their place of work as possible.
Role of planning in the region.

Planning in the region dates back to 1914 when the Bombay Presidency created a Town Planning and Valuation Department which was involved in the growth of measures to control and regulate the development of the major cities in the region – Bombay, Poona and Thana. Though in spirit planning has been in force in the region since the beginning of the century the development of the area has nonetheless been haphazard. Most of the plans were illustrious documents without much practical implication, setting targets that none seriously expected would be achieved. Rarely did the results match the desired policy aims. In addition most of the earlier plan reports, apart from being only land use plans, set down in an ad hoc manner the measures to be taken, without fully analysing the effects of these measures. Thus when there was a restriction placed on the growth of new industries in Greater Bombay no concentration other than 'zoning' of certain areas for industries on an arbitrary basis was shown while issuing licences for these industries in the peripheral areas. Since no proper layouts were insisted upon the development in these areas was haphazard and in addition many problems of housing, transport facilities and services have been created.

Again, though it has long been recognised that the planning for the area should be in a regional perspective little has been achieved except for setting up of Regional planning boards and making statutory regional plans. The development of the region has been seen to be limited essentially to a narrow zone almost hugging the arterial routes. Large areas of the hinterland of the axial zone have remained undeveloped. Within one and a half hours journey from Bombay
may be observed the most primitive of civilisation in the
tribal areas of Bhivandi. Similarly though the Bombay-Poona
region in known for its efficient transport system it is
essentially restricted to be fast suburban locals with their
focus on Bombay and Poona. Lateral linkages of the network
have been seen to be poorly developed and extensive areas
unserviced.

The land use plans for the cities too have essentially
concentrated on land zoning. Viewing the growth of Ambernath,
a planned industrial suburb of Greater Bombay since the twenties,
it is observed that the basic infrastructure and civic amenities
are as poorly developed as in the case of Pimpri-Chinchwad an
undeveloped industrial suburb which has developed only since
the last twenty years. It clearly emerges therefore, that
control of land use alone is not sufficient while planning a
city. Again more attention should be focussed on the orientation
of a city and the direction in which it should be steered rather
than planning an aesthetically pleasing and ordered environment.

One peculiar difficulty we encounter in a federal country
like ours is the problem of co-ordinating the plans and the
projects of the various agencies, operating at the central, the
state and the local levels. Overlapping responsibilities and
competing agencies without co-ordination cause delays which rob
the plans of most of their significance. One of the reasons why
the New Bombay project did not progress as rapidly as expected
was the failure of the Central Government to take up the Nava
sheva project which was supposed to be an important output for
the development of the twin city.

The problems of administration merge with those of
pressure groups, political interests and corruption. Thus despite
a ban on the location of large scale plants in Greater Bombay,
particularly plants with a high water consumption a large
Government of India fertiliser plant has been established at
Chembur. Again CEAT has been given permission to build a new
tyre plant in the city.

The immense concentration of urbanisation and
industrialisation in the region has generated a host of
problems, such as the growth of slums, an acute shortage of
social and civic amenities and traffic congestion. Inspite
of these diverse ills due to which the cities have often been
viewed primarily as appalling welfare problems, they are still
the most important engines of growth not only in the study area
but also in the country. The prosperity of Bombay triggered
not only the growth of the city but also its hinterland and
today the Bombay - Poona axial region is one of the most
important components of the Indian economy. The high per
capita productivity and per capita income (Rs. 1285 as compared
to Rs. 525 for the state and Rs. 402 for the country) reflects
the dynamism of the urban economy and emphasises the potential
of metropolitan regions being used as levers for the economic
transformation of society.