CHAPTER VI

THE ECONOMIC SPACE RELATIONSHIP OF THE URBAN CENTRES OF THE REGION

The primary concept of urban space relationship is centred around the fact that the urban centres develop in response to demands from the host of other places particularly around it in the countryside. Indeed, Mark Jefferson\(^1\) observed rightly that towns do not grow up of themselves. Countrysides set them up to do tasks that must be performed in central places. No town lives to itself. It serves other areas which can be said to constitute the urban centre's "market region". In turn, the region serves the town. Such functioning is of immediate interest to geographers because the inter-connections between town and region are one significant type of spatial relationship. Thus, an important aspect of urban geography is the analysis of those ties which bind the urban centre to its region.\(^2\)

The urban landscape of a region develops by the sprawl of townscape over it through, mostly and significantly, its communication arteries, as a positive response to the growing needs of the surrounding areas of the initial location.

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of an urban centre. The landscape gradually gets multiplied as the initial urban centre of the region assumes single concentration monopoly for catering the needs of the tributary region or even by creating its satellitic agents within its own system for transferring certain amount of its monopoly to the latter, thus working towards a decentralization of activities and amenities. These factors eventually lead to the positive and quick growth of urban landscape of the region.

"Dibrugarh and its environs" probably demonstrate the above logic in a true perspective.

One of the strongest ties of interaction between the urban centre and the region is the economic bond, for the economic life of a town is inextricably interwoven with the economic life of its region. A portion of the economic effort in a town is supported by non-local demands. But these urban dwellers in turn have need for local services, and thus a second urban function is discernible that which caters to the needs of local inhabitants. The difference between these two economic efforts is of fundamental importance in the development of urban landscape because the non-local demand of the townscape constitutes the town's economic foundation for further existence and growth. The relationship of non-local and local demands has been outlined by Jefferson\(^3\) as "basic and non-

\(^{3}\) Ibid.
basic concept since according to him and Ratcliff⁴ the non-local demands energise "the primary or 'city-building' activities which bring into the community purchasing power from outside".

In the above context, the service-activities and functions of each of the 29 urban centres were examined qualitatively and it was observed that the three major urban centres are clearly supported by non-local demands, and every centre, large and small, has within it or in its tributary region some sort of industrial activity mainly to export their respective products to the areas outside their own. In case of the major centres, the export was well outside the region "Dibrugarh and its environs" as can well be surmised if the accounts given earlier under chapter III discussing the "industrial activities" be taken into consideration. Processed tea and timber and even an item like the re-rolling mill and its accessories are mainly for export outside not simply of the parent region, but outside the state of Assam. The author feels it unnecessary to repeat on this point since much has been said while discussing the industrial activities of the region. However, it will be worthwhile to give a quantitative representation of the basic and non-basic concept as a support to the existence of a dynamic urban process leading to a

developing urban landscape in the region based on the occupational structure providing a logical economic relationship between the urban centres and the hinterland.

Table XXIX*

Employment structure in Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Digboi towns of the region "Dibrugarh and its environs"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Total Employment</th>
<th>Dibrugarh</th>
<th>Tinsukia</th>
<th>Digboi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Manufacturing</td>
<td>2,403</td>
<td>2,061</td>
<td>6,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Trade &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>4,225</td>
<td>3,468</td>
<td>1,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Government, Semi-Govt. &amp; Quasi-Govt.</td>
<td>4,325</td>
<td>2,240</td>
<td>1,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other services</td>
<td>3,983</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>1,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Transport</td>
<td>4,876</td>
<td>1,089</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other including construction, small household industries and agricultural work</td>
<td>2,084</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Employees</td>
<td>21,896</td>
<td>11,923</td>
<td>11,335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The figures considered here are the 1961 census figures limited to the respective municipal boundaries only. The basic and non-basic occupational pattern is approximately found out with the help of the estimated surplus over local needs, obtained by the number actually employed in the respective urban centre minus the estimated local need of the centre. The estimated local need is taken arbitrarily based on information collected with the help of few random sample questionnaires, on the assumption that the occupational need is proportional to the population of the respective centre. This estimate may not give the exact values, but it is logically hoped that an assessment of near-reality is possible by this estimation. (B/N Ratio ........ Basic - Non-basic Ratio).
B. Basic Employment:

1. Manufacturing  1,827  1,725  4,925
2. Trade & Commerce  3,688  2,493  898
3. Government, Semi-Govt. & Quasi Govt.  1,227  1,113  428
4. Other services  1,705  1,032  342
5. Transport  3,231  675  140
6. Other including construction, small household industries and agricultural work  630  423  155

Number of Employees  12,308  7,461  6,888

1961 population  58,480  28,468  35,028

1951-61 Population Growth  53.93%  132.49%  *

Total Employment  21,896  11,923  11,335

Basic Employment  12,308  7,461  6,888

Leading Basic Activities:

(a) Trade & Commerce
(b) Transport
(c) Manufacturing

Non-basic Employment  9,588  4,462  4,447

B/N Ratio  100 : 78  100 : 60  100 : 65

If we examine the above table it is clear that in each case there are surplus employees over the local needs.

* Considered as a Town since 1961 census only.
and this in turn suggests that each urban centre does a considerable work for its hinterland or for regions outside its regional jurisdiction. Tinsukia and Digboi with significant B/N ratios, 100 : 60 and 100 : 65 respectively, contribute very much for the region with a greater impetus to give to the hinterland and the region with "open system" functions than simply self-sufficient "close system" entities. Dibrugarh with the B/N ratio, 100 : 78, though contributes significantly (over 12,000 basic employees as against about 7,000 in each of Tinsukia and Digboi), falls to a lower order having a considerably large population to cater the local needs, and in fact, it is due to the educational, cultural and social nucleus of the region that the occupational need for this urban centre proportional to the total population is greater than the same for Tinsukia or Digboi. But, the absolute number of basic employees clearly indicates undoubtedly the dynamic urban process of this centre particularly due to the fact that the basic employment in transport in this centre is mainly to control the transport linkage of the individual urban tributary hinterland of the entire region in addition to the linkage outside the region, "Dibrugarh and its environs".

The table XXIX and the diagrams based on the data for different occupational categories, basic and non-basic, are self explanatory and these endorse the descriptions made
DIBRUGARH & ITS ENVIRONS
ECONOMIC STRUCTURE
OF
THE THREE MAJOR URBAN CENTRES

DIBRUGARH

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TRANSPORT

MAJOR FUNCTIONS:
(a) TRADE & COMMERCE
(b) TRANSPORT
(c) MANUFACTURING.

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MAJOR FUNCTIONS:
(a) MANUFACTURING.

(MARK THE POSITION OF MANUFACTURING IN BASIC ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND THE MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ACTIVITIES OF DIBRUGARH.)
earlier in part I of the work under chapter III dealing with economic activities of the region. Considering the basic employment which is necessary for growth of an integrated urban landscape it may suffice to mention here that, Dibgoi is primarily a manufacturing town with the oil refinery and other manufacturing works mentioned earlier whereas Dibrugarh and Tinsukia are primarily commercial centres with, of course, transport and manufacturing for the former and only manufacturing for the latter as secondary (though not less significant) functions. These three major centres are primarily responsible for diffusion of the urban innovations and urban tendencies in the region, thereby giving rise to a reasonably interwoven integrated urban tributary system in the region. The quick development of the potential urban centres nevertheless owes much to the inter urban pull between these three centres, but Dibrugarh with the diversified basic occupational structure clearly emerges as the central magnet of the entire landscape which is unquestionably a reality, since it is the nucleus of commerce, administration, education and culture of the entire region.