CHAPTER 5

SEZ AND RESPONSE OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The previous two chapter shared in detail the interactions, perceptions and aspirations of the affected women in the three villages under study. This chapter will detail out the information about the SEZ establishment in the area, this information is collated through secondary data such as information available in the government records, the information on the website of the SEZ, and research findings of another researcher in the same area. This chapter will also share the reflections of the NGO functionaries in the area working on different subjects, some since before the project was introduced and some who have started working after the project was established.

The chapter is thus divided into two sections – the government and the SEZ nexus, and the sharing’s of the NGO functionaries about the project and its after-effects in the area as seen by them.

5.1 Government – SEZ nexus

In India, land is a State subject and the government in the local or national level is responsible for acquiring the land (Fernandez, 1991, 2001, 2008; Parasuraman, 1993; Sharma, 2010) and in a surge to attract industries to their respective states for industrialisation and other developmental projects, the state government turns into a ‘coercive land brokers for capital’ (Levien, 2012, p. 946). As Palit (2009a) points out this zones offer policymakers the opportunity of creating enabling conditions within delimited geographical domains. Development of such pockets for reducing transaction costs of doing business
creates discriminatory incentive structures between zone and non-zone segments. These structures can encourage investments to localise in zones at the expense of other areas.

After more than 60 years of independence, India is experiencing ‘social justice in reverse gear’ with a failure to uphold the land rights to the poor. It is to be remembered that among the highest numbers of SEZ notified in India, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu are at the forefront. The massive land grab phenomenon practiced in these states can be understood through taking Harvey’ Marxian concept of ‘accumulation through dispossession’ to explain the processes of accumulation operating under neo-liberal capitalism in the world today. Accumulation by dispossession produces a set of assets at very lower, at times, zero cost. The over accumulated capital, which is lying idle seizes such assets and turns them into profitable use. In this case, the SEZs are an example of how the corporates under the neo-liberal regime turned domineering demanding concessions from the state while dispossessing farmers from their land and habitat (Chigurupati & Srinivasan, 2011). While Vijayabaskar (2010) argues that policy implementation influences and gets shaped by the regional political economy, pointing out that there are clear structural reasons for the willingness of farmers to give up their land and move away from agriculture. It is highlighted that despite being home to a large number of SEZs, Tamil Nadu has been one state which has not witnessed resistance to SEZs in general, and land acquisition in particular, on a scale comparable to states with a similar history of SEZs. In India, the differences in processes of policymaking and implementation across states is governed by a macro-economic regime which offers an interesting opening to understand the
regional politico-economic configurations intersecting with policies in shaping outcomes. It should be stressed further that couched in a language of autonomy, recent economic reforms pressure state governments to take on more responsibility for resources mobilisation, the SEZ Act passed in 2005 by the Central government being one of the cases. Outright resistance and repel in Goa or agitations in West Bengal have been the reactions. In case of Tamil Nadu, with nearly 50 notified SEZs and one of the first states to formulate a SEZ policy in 2003; making it home to the country’s “first operational SEZ”, the Mahindra World City, it is observed that the resistance has been fairly nondescript. The factors for this readiness to give away their land may be understood on the presence of a long history of caste politics in the region, in which the sheer rural setting itself was considered as the site of oppression, therefore the farmers are gradually moving away from agriculture and taking up other occupational practices that are opening avenues for their social mobility. The land-owning farmers seemed to have extracted a good compensation packages for themselves after their negotiations with their political candidates from the area who willingly agreed for a higher price than the government or the private developers were earlier offering. Although misappropriations were visible with the marginalised small-time farmers in which case the land allotted to them under the Bhoodan Scheme was forcibly taken away from them citing that these lands were under the Bhoodan Board which has the authority to take it back at any given time. The lack of formal title deeds leading to denial of compensation, the threat of compulsory and arbitrary takeover are among the factors instrumental for the people to dispose the lands as well (Vijayabaskar, 2010).
The government acquires the state-owned and privately owned land under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 and mostly on the ‘public purpose’ or ‘eminent domain’ clause (Agarwal, 1997; Chakraborty, 2016; Vijayabaskar, 2010) from the poor farmers. The affected party is provided with a compensation in monetary form as well as employment for maintaining the status quo of the affected people before the acquisition or making them better off (Mahapatra, 1999; Randeria, 2003; Thomas, 2002; Wade, 2011). The government then enters into an agreement with the company or industry for which the acquisition is undertaken generally for a set time-period, mostly on a lease period of 99 renewable years (Levien, 2012).

In case of the present study, the state government body of JDA (Jaipur Development Authority) undertook the task of acquiring the land for the industry. In total, 3000 acres of land was acquired, of which 1000 acres was common grazing land which is officially government and 2000 acres of privately-owned land was taken. This entire land mass was spread over nine villages in the Sanganer Tehsil. The government land was automatically transferred to the company and the affected people were not provided with any kind of compensation for the same, this land was used by the villagers for grazing their cattle. While for the private land a seemingly interesting land deal was proposed, that was 25 percent of the acquired land would be returned to the affected people in a developed form. This land deal had the expected outcome of some people getting attracted to the future real-estate prospects and the others unwilling for the same (Levien, 2012, 2015). However, other than one village out of the total nine villages that lost their land, no one opposed the project in unison.
This land deal was touted by the media as a ‘fair deal’ (As cited in Levien, 2012, p.946) and ‘unique’ (‘Land Wars’, 2011). It needs to be remembered that the farmers never entered into a dialogue or participation in the process and only some influential members were consulted (Levien, 2012). MWC is playing the role of a ‘capitalist rentier who commodifies land for other capitalists and urban real estate development’ (Levien, 2012, p.947). The zone has already sold ‘developed land parcels’ to more than 60 companies in its IT, light-engineering and handicrafts zones (Levien, 2012). It is targeted that once sufficient companies have settled in and started their operations in full-fledge, the MWC will begin building its residential section, known as the ‘Lifestyle Zone’ which is going to be constructed on 40 percent of the acquired land (Levien, 2012).

To understand the process of land acquisition in this project site chronologically is as follows:

### Table 5.1: Chronology of the chain of event in land acquisition process in MWC

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<th>In July 2005, the project was announced by the State government</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>In mid-2006, the JDA notified the nine villages and land acquisition started</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>In end of 2006, except Jhai village, rest of the eight villages that were affected handover their land titles to the JDA</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>In 2007, Jhai village also hands over their title deed, as they are not able to bear the losses incurred over the time period</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In 2008, the MWC is inaugurated by the Chief Minister amidst thunderous cheers from capitalists industry and media</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>By 2015, the MWC is fully operational and close to 65 companies are operating in the zone</td>
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In July 2005, the then Chief Minister Ms. Vasundhara Raje announced the project in the area citing milestone change in the development growth for Jaipur is foreseen. SEZ were facing many objections and dissents in other parts of the country, like in Singur, Nandigram etc. In mid-2006, the land acquisition notification was published in the local newspapers and the villagers of all the nine villages on the list saw a notice in their Panchayat office black board, they discussed with their respective Sarpanch’s and were confirmed that the JDA would be acquiring about 2000 acres of land privately owned by the villagers. The grazing land which is government land and treated as common property resource would also be acquired and handed over to a corporate house, namely Mahindra. Here we have to notice that no consultation was held with the affected poor villagers.

The JDA began the compensation process and handing over of the title-deed from the villagers by end of 2006. The monetary compensation was on the market value basis and a land deal parcel of returning quarter of their actual land plot in developed from was also provided. The Zone provided job mostly to the male member of the family with no concern whatsoever for the women who had also become unemployed as a result of the dispossession (Levien, 2012). The men were provided work of security guards, janitors, drivers and gardeners (Levien, 2012). As Levien (2012) interjected that the project did not have a plan for utilising the rural labour and thus the actual transformation that SEZ brought about was the dispossession and commodification of land for the affected rural people. By end of 2006, out of the nine villages, eight of them gave away their land to the JDA, only one village called Jhai in unison refused to give away their land and filed for an injunction in the court citing that they
did not have any alternate livelihood and providing subsistence for their family was in doubt. The honourable Court initially stayed the acquisition for the villagers however after further contemplation and petition from the executing agency RIICO & MWC the court realised that such a stay would not help the affected people as the sealed land from agricultural activity does not help them either. The court mandated the executing agency to provide for compensation in both cash and kind, jobs to at least one member of the household, along with land for land compensation was approved. The terms were agreeable for the community and thus in 2007 they handed over their land documents to the authorities.

The SEZ with the IT unit over 750 acre of land was inaugurated in the year 2008 where the IT companies like Infosys, Wipro, Nucleus Software, Connexions and Tech Mahindra have started their back-hand operations. It was welcomed by the capitalist industry and media wholeheartedly. It was emphasized that new avenues of employment opportunities are made available to the youth of Rajasthan (“Vasundhara Raje inaugurates” 2008).

According to the MWC website, they are integrating business cities through these establishment as found in Chennai and Jaipur. These developments are spread over 4600 acres of land that would station more than 130 global and national companies that would ensure in providing the “integrated environment of Livelihood, Living and Life” (Mahindra World City, n.d.). As recently as 2015, the MWC is fully operational and around 65 companies are operating in the zone (Mahindra World City, n.d.).
Industrialization is the new development in India since independence and still remains the same. The MWC points out that the land was arid and uncultivable however according to the villagers they had one full crop and that was sufficient for their needs. They were not rich farmers but they emphasise that it was a self-sufficient village economy which no one was particularly worried about. The MWC did not consult them at any stage and no social impact assessments were conducted because during the environment impact assessment it was observed that no habitation has been physically impacted by the project.

5.2 Opinions of the Civil Society Organisation in the area

As Salamon (1994) eulogised on the conception of the ‘associational revolution’ that entailed the formation of the ‘private, non-profit or non-governmental organisations’ as the crowning glory of the twentieth century comparing it to the building of the nation-state in the previous century; ‘striking upsurge’ was evidenced on a global level. This revolution also called the Third sector has a influencing role wherein it would not be wrong to say that the NGOs are powerful enough to create change in the administrative machinery, for example in India alone, the implementation of Right to Information (RTI) and Right to Education (RTE) are the direct culmination of a social pressures that was created consistently by the social activists and such socially driven bodies.

Although in order to understand the influence of the various agencies on the policy formulation of a nation it is opportune to understand what are policies – social, economic or political. Since its inception around 1950s as an organized field of academic endeavour Social Policy was seen as a complex phenomenon addressing a myriad of issues. Broadly, policies are the statements that prescribe
and routinize the courses of action of an organization. Governments make extensive use of policies to carry out their many complex functions. Globally, Governments have formulated and implemented policies to maintain law and order, ensure national defense, promote economic development and discharge their many other obligations. Although mostly Governments form social policies to enhance the welfare of their citizens, it sometimes so happens that they turn out to be harmful unintentionally or designed to cause harm. (Midgley, Tracy & Livermore, 1999).

There are of course a number of other stakeholders influencing the social policy scenario such as Government, target people who will be affected/impacted, Implementing agencies, Intelligentsia, Media, Opposition, Economic institutions; among all these stakeholders, during the industrial era the government and the economic institutions were the most highly influential and the other parties slowly gained access and made their way to influence the system in their favour (Doh & Teegen, 2003; Fisher, 1998; MacPherson, 1982). Fisher (1998) suggested that there is a need to reroute the political debate with the civil society at the centre with the economy or business and government spheres in the periphery as that would impact changes in the nature of the political discourse as it will open the floodgates to usher in the new thought process that gives credence on the collaborative work amongst these entities which would result in the overall development and growth of the society at large.

As Tandon & Mohanty (2003) pointed out that civil society are public forums that are not under government control and which have linkages with the
citizenry in individual capacity as well as a like-minded group. It is expected of the civil society to provide the platform to the voiceless and marginalised to raise their voice and present their thought to the wider body of the nation where solution, strategies and know-hows could be exchanged for better dealing with the anomaly. The group in collective will be able to influence the State to change policies which affect the people at large. It can become a movement when issues are widely affecting people, case in point is the land rights movement in India which was instrumental in changing the LAA1894 legislation into RFCTLARR 2013. Even the civil society mobilisation had another significant success when they were able to motivate the Indian judiciary system that came out with the milestone judgement on the customary rights aspect of the indigenous tribal population in India (Perera, 2014). There is a need for collaborative interventions and strategies between the civil society and the international bodies that work on policy, implementation and funding of various developmental projects to address different forms of marginalisation and deprivations in the country (Perera, 2014).

In the present study area, during the field work the researcher was able to identify three NGOs working in the study area, namely Pratham, Astha Sanstha, and Asha Jyoti. Each of them had different sets of focus area to operate in these villages. The first one has their focus on the educational needs of the children in these areas, more specifically on the reading, writing skills of the children. There is a health element also which is operational in other villages nearby not in any of the 3 villages under study. The second organisation is running SHGs with the women in these villages. While the third organisation claims to be fighting for the rights of the affected people.
The first organisation had entered the Sanganer tehsil in the year 2003-2004, however they came to the under-study villages in 2005 and have since been working there till date. The second organisation is working in the area since 2000 and are running SHGs with the young girls and women and have about 135 members as of date. The third organisation is a trust run by the son of the current Sarpanch and he shared that he is working with the SEZ officials to provide better packages for all the affected families.

The organisations as shared earlier had started their operations in different time period. Like in case of Pratham, the representative shared that they came to this location when the land acquisition process had just begun and they have seen the transition in their lifestyle over the period of time. Earlier other than Jhai, all the other villagers in the area were not very particular to send their children to school, and they would be found playing around the village at all times. Interesting all the children were enrolled in the government school. In Jhai, their team was welcomed with open arms right from the beginning as the Sarpanch would say, ‘hum chahte hain ki humare gaon ka har ek bacha pade likhe aur khub tarakki kare, hum jante hain shiksha hi ek matr zariya hain unke ujwal bhavishya ke liye’ (... we want each and every child in our village to read and write and get ahead in their lives, we understand that only quality education is the means to their bright future...). They were quick to comprehend the utility of our age appropriate reading-writing module. It was felt confidently that the children from this village are some of the best children’s with respect to reading-writing skills in the organisations data base.

With regards to the other two villages, namely Kalwara and Bhambhoriya, since the land acquisition took place and their agriculture-base was disrupted, all the
people are now employed in different professions, interestingly, many of the villagers have come up with the realisation that English-medium education for their children is the only way they can move ahead and compete with the outside world, “this change in thought-process is useful for our purposes as now they acknowledge that reading-writing skills is quintessential for the children to comprehend and articulate their thoughts accordingly”. As the level is still quite low, the remedial classes are running to the fullest capacities. They have even collaborated with the local primary & secondary school Principals and they even have a session on the topic every Tuesdays and Thursdays & every Wednesday and Friday respectively. The Parent-Teacher bodies are also comparatively more active and it works in the organisations favour as they are able to pitch their ideas of quality education and ensure enjoy- not- just- rot principle with full momentum. The section of children who are attending the private schools are participating in their evening sessions.

So in her opinion, the SEZ project has uprooted the original livelihood of people and they have ever since been finding their footings in different professions, however with regards to the impact on children, it is her personal belief that SEZ has been good for them. The guardians are now extremely diligent about educating them, irrespective of their gender. There has never been instances of sex-selection and female-feticide in these areas, however, there has been a different social menace in the form of child marriage which is also gradually reducing over the period. She summed up saying “all in all, this project although might not have been my design but it so happened by default and I consider it positive with respect to the changes in children’s lives.”
In case of the second organisation working with the young girls and women in the villages around the area, the representative shared that according to him the project has brought many major changes to the lifestyles of these villagers, some of which is positive while some are not. He pointed out about the ancestors of village Bhambhoriya and said “this village called Bhambhoriya is inhabited by mostly Mina tribe people, however they are originally the ‘Banjara’s’ (Nomadic) so they generally do not settle in one place, but some couple of them settled in this village some 4-5 generations back and took up farming as their primary source of livelihood but they are fantastic craftsman and can make anything out of a lump of clay, you just need to say the word”. Their organisation is trying to revive the same but most of the new generation have rarely practiced it so they need training but the older generation men are well-versed but eccentric so when they want to do it, they do such fantastic work, but otherwise they’re not very excited about it. He says that the older men say, “... it was our elders decision that we would adopt farming as our primary work and they settled here to do the same, we learned whatever little we can from them as hobbies, they never encouraged us to practice it as profession but now with the farming option gone completely, we have to look for other means to survival.”. The men felt that it is not fair. The organisation is trying to motivate them but it will take more time and effort. Women from all the three villages participate in the SHG, in fact they are trying to diversify to pickle-making, handicraft items, etc. which has good demand but collaborations have to be good. They are currently in talks with a team of entrepreneurs who have their stores in Milan, Italy and Mumbai, he says, “…if that works out well, our ladies will be supplying their products internationally” with lot of pride and
satisfaction in his voice. It was shared by this representative that for the work they are doing, the SEZ project has not caused any change other than more women interested to join as sitting idle.

In case of the third organisation which is the newest organisation among them, they started their work since 2007-08. It was shared that the inception of the organisation was the brainchild of the realisation among many of the villagers in Kalwara that their earlier Sarpanch had cheated them and had acquired their lands from them in paltry prices in comparison to what SEZ project compensation was offering to the affected people. And also they became a major affected party as a large portion of land was reflected as theirs and so they received a hefty compensation. It was opined by him that the SEZ project has only brought pain and suffering for the villagers, “…we did not want this forced development, our lives are forever changed for the worse.” There was no discussion with the affected party or else they could have shared their worries. He shared that they understand that the project cannot be closed down now but they are seeking rightful compensation for the affected parties who were cheated by the erstwhile Sarpanch. However the SEZ authorities are not willing to entertain their demands, citing that they [SEZ] have not defaulted and therefore they cannot be called accountable for the same. He informed that they are trying to build a case against the Sarpanch, “...but the thing is that the affected parties are not coming forward to file a case, they want resolution out–of–court.” But in that case, SEZ cannot be pulled into the conversation. However, they have been able to build the momentum and are hoping for a breakthrough soon. He lamented further that, “…affected people are so aggrieved, they have taken up alcoholism in a big way and it won’t be long
when anti-alcoholism drives would have to be organised...I don’t understand why let a problem take birth and grow, when it can be nipped at the bud.” He justifies the actions of these men by pointing out that workload is causing it “…but the men in the village is now forced to work outside leading him to come in contact with various nefarious elements, so drinking, gambling are ways to forget their pain.”

The three organisations have their own objectives for working in the area and are found to be reactive according to their vantage point. Some of them are assessing the negative factors only while others are looking into both the negative and the positive impacts of the MWC SEZ. There could also be a vested interest element as far as politically-inclined organisations are concerned which may be the case with the third organisation which is run by the present Sarpanch’ son and solely focusses on the political mileage of the issue. As the researcher probed further on what was their understanding about the mechanism of establishing a SEZ in India, the response was vague and unclear leading to the researcher to believe that the NGO front may be a political façade. The authenticity of the civil society organisations is doubted and scorned in the elitist modern society where a generalisation is drawn on the basis of some unauthenticated organisations.

However, the indirect impact of social mobilisation of some genuine NGOs to uplift and develop the society for a brighter, better, equitable future society is undeniable and undisputed and in the present study area as well the two organisations working on the subject of quality primary education and the other on women empowerment and skill development are living proof of the same. The change in the mindset of the villagers about the evil practice of child
marriages may be found in the gradual instillation through different awareness programmes and discussions in these platforms over a period of time.

The absence of a social impact assessment in case of the project has denied the possibility for a smooth and gradual transition of the affected people and whatever the MWC proposes as CSR initiative have to be seen with wariness as to their actual intent.

The existing civil society did not play any constructive role in sensitizing the community about the possible lifestyle changes that had been introduced due to resettlement and rehabilitation. The organisations operated doggedly on their set focus and mission areas without assessing the overall adjustment issues of the affected communities. Their observation about the positive impacts may be seen as mere happy coincidence as the opposite effect of complete breakdown of the society is always a risk and a possibility in case of such drastic life-altering events.