CHAPTER 5

Transformation of the Landscape:
Impact and Responses
In considering...transformations...distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, or philosophic in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of...conflict and fight it out. (Karl Marx cited in Williams, 1960: 284)

5.1 Material Conditions and Associated Social Construction in the Study Region

The nature and forms of people’s responses, struggles and resistances have been variously studied and understood in the particular contexts in which they have taken place. Studies (Rodrigues, 1998) have shown the importance of examining the social locus of rebellion and the roles played by class, caste and economic crises in the production and creation of social struggle and transformation. As different locales are connected, particularly in the current globalised economy, one can no longer consider local communities – be they tribal or otherwise – as self-sustaining entities that determine the fate of their lives and related commons through ‘self-governance’ or ‘community participation’. Erosion and devastation of commons have assumed critical dimensions in current times and the larger processes play a decisive role in shaping and restructuring the spaces available for self-governance. It has been seen in several instances (Maringanti & others, 2012) (Prasad & others, 2012) that the real tragedy of the commons is the ease with which existing rights are overwritten and displaced. Livelihood struggles are increasingly faced with rapidly reducing natural resource bases and issues of sustainability. The following sections describe people’s responses and analyse the trajectories of resistance in relation to the nature of transformation of the study region as discussed in previous chapters. Changes in the nature of response and resistance and their connections to wider development processes and associated metanarratives are explored.

Studies of the evolution of social categories such as caste (Deshpande, 2003) emphasise the importance of locating its history in regional and local contexts. This accounts for the varied, and sometimes contradictory, practices and conceptualisation of identity in
different locales as everyday life and experiences rooted in specific material conditions shape the consciousness and sense of identity of communities over time. Uran taluka, as previously described, had a unique coastal ecology with uplands, midlands and lowlands marked by rivers, creeks, estuaries, islands and an extensive if varying coastline. The distribution of ecological resources in the region is found to have influenced the social composition of community settlements in lowland, midland and upland villages. Predominantly peopled by the Agri community, other groups found in smaller numbers in Uran taluka are the Kolis, Karadis, Sonars, Vanis, Dhangars, Pardeshis, Kalans, Marathas, Nhavis, Chandraseniya Kayasth Prabhus (CKPs), Beldars, Mahars, Brahmins, Lohars, Kasars, Buruds, all considered part of the Hindu community, and Muslims (Patil, 1995). The varying combinations of social identities1 distinguished by caste, religion and regional origins have evolved over time with shifts in the political economic process of the region. From an independent coastal agrarian economy linked to shifting patterns of trade, the region became subservient to the imperatives of the metropolis of Mumbai as the latter evolved from a colonial entrepot to a national industrial and financial centre in the post-colonial period, and in the current neoliberal era into a global city. People-nature interactions in the last stage changed from that of close association to a fragmented and disjointed one.

The importance of people’s association and interaction with nature is evident in their descriptions of community culture and in the attributes that were valued or regarded as prestigious. For example, most of the traditional characteristics of the Agri community of North Konkan2 as listed by a local author (Madhavi, 2013) are explained as products of their extremely close association with nature in the region’s ecosystem. The development of physique and persona are found to emerge from the abilities needed to face and work with the rhythms, capriciousness and dangers of sea and land. While the unpredictability of the natural elements necessitated the inculcation of frugality and a cooperative spirit, direct access to the enormous range of ecological resources in the region also brought

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1 The main communities found in Raigad District are Brahmins, Chandraseniya Kayasth Prabhus, Agris, Kunbis, Malis, Kalans, Bhandaris, Kasars, Son Kolis, Mahadeo Kolis, Malhar Kolis, Katkaris, Thakurs, Dhangars and Chambhars belonging to the Hindu community, along with Buddhists, Bene Israelis (Jews) and Muslims (Patil, 2012).

2 See Annexure 5.1 for details of these characteristics.
self-sufficiency. Importantly, their ability to support themselves through the years brought with it a sense of self-worth, self-respect and pride. The integration of this community with their environment is also seen in customs of food (varied rice dishes and fish preparations) and clothing (Thakur, 2007) that evolved to suit the locally available resources and terrain. The list of community characteristics indicates that traits needed to maximise the productivity of the people’s relationship with nature were consciously promoted. The resulting expertise attained by this community is evident for example in the comments of a Settlement Officer in 1892 with regard to cultivation practices in the region.

‘...the Agris’ field practice is of the highest order. Full advantage is taken of all positions favourable to cultivation, and embanking with field to field irrigation is carried out in high perfection.’ (Turnbull quoted in Charlesworth, 1985; pp. 275)

Researches (Thakur, 2007) have also shown the high value placed on virility and progeny in a region where one’s survival depended on the availability of adequate labour. The commonality of co-wives and the idealisation of marrying two wives by the worship of God Khandoba, the lord of two wives, can also be viewed as the development of a culture rooted in the material conditions of the region. While the preference for male offspring is clearly related to patriarchal property relations, the custom of bride price indicates the value that women had in the creation of a family labour force. Similarly, the practice of religious rituals done in the absence of Brahmin priests is also an outcome of the peculiar social composition of the region. While some cultural aspects have been sustained, others have been discarded with the changing nature of production relations that also signalled a change in their connection to the ecological environment. For example, the prevalence of bride price gave way to the dowry system in the 1980s and 1990s (Patil, 2011) as people got dissociated from the land after acquisition by the state for the establishment of New Mumbai. Self-sufficiency related to the size of family labour was replaced by the new importance of permanent formal employment that privileged men of the community.

It is also apparent from the addition of characteristics that relate to conditions at different points in time, that human consciousness is always historical (Williams, 1960) ‘at any time including continuities from the past as well as reactions to the present’ (Ibid; pp.
Some attributes were included as the community became conscious of themselves relative to other communities. The attribute of being service-oriented (sewagiri) and not piratical (chaanche giri navhe), for example, was probably added in the 17th or 18th centuries when piracy was rampant off the west coast of India and Kanhoji Angre was touted as a pirate by the Europeans. The communities’ perceptions of themselves and the issues they faced were also manifest through oral history, art/folk forms, music and dance. Most villages had at least one group that would write and stage plays and/or compose songs that reflected topical issues confronting the community. For example the play ‘Kul Kayada’ (Thakur, 2007) that commented on the excesses of the Khoti system was staged in Khopta Village of Eastern Uran in the mid-1940s when the Khoti Abolition Bill had been passed and implementation of the Tenancy Act was being debated.

Besides the Agris who constitute the largest community in the region are the Kolis and Karadis. Of the two communities the Karadis are found only in Raigad District, concentrated in three main sub-regions – Panvel, Uran and Chaul-Alibag. The current Karadi population is estimated to be approximately 35-40 thousand (Shinde, 2007). The migration of some families to Mumbai in search of employment in the late nineteenth century led to the creation of a new division there. Although they were initially concentrated at Mazgaon in Mumbai, families began migrating to various suburbs from the 1950s. The emergence of the Karadi community as a distinct caste and contestations regarding their identity (Shinde, 2007) were also shaped by the complex interactions between “native traditions” and “scientific history” (Guha, 2004) in which colonial representations played a major role. Recorded oral histories (Shinde, 2007) emphasize their being direct descendants of the original set of ninety-six Kshatriya families of Rajput ancestry, held to be forebears of a core Maratha elite (Deshpande, 2003) in Maharashtra. The exact origin of the name ‘Karadi’ (earlier written as ‘Karhadi’) is unknown but the community believes that although they are now considered a distinct caste group, the name is more likely to have come from their association with a place –

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3 Chanch was said to be an island of pirates off the coast of Kathiawad, Kutch, Gujarat (Madhavi, 2013).
4 For location of Karadi settlements in Mumbai and Raigad district please see Annexure 5.2.
5 The population of Karadis in the 17th century was less than 600 (Shinde, 2007).
Karad\(^6\) province or Karha\(^7\) River - or with cultivation of a variety of grass called *karad* that was specially grown as fodder for horses.

Their migration appears to have occurred en masse from three villages located on the banks of Karha River, where their prime occupation was cultivation supplemented by military service. No ties or remaining kin have been found in or around the Karad region or Karha River. While most accounts say that their migration in the 15\(^{th}\) or 16\(^{th}\) century AD was due to political compulsion, reasons given for the shift vary. One account says they were brought to this region to defend the coast against foreign enemies while another says they were brought to oversee the upkeep of the creek areas and salt lands in the region. Given the time of migration, the first explanation appears plausible as it coincides with the onslaught of European forces on the west coast of India. Possible connections with Kanhoji Angre who had his roots in Satara district support this thesis. Having lived on the banks of a river, cultivation, fishing, and being comfortable around water come naturally to members of this community. Ninety six percent of the Karadi villages are located on inaccessible islands, lowlands, marshlands and salt lands\(^8\). Their community traits of bravery, tall physique and honesty are connected to their *kshatriya* ancestry, history of civil and military service, as well as outcomes of their interaction with the regional environment – “*desh tasa vesh*” (Shinde, 2007).

The consciousness of the local communities thus was influenced greatly by the way they interacted with each other and the extent to which they could be pushed to change or were exploited. Social identity and the extent of their rootedness in the region are seen to have played an important role in the nature of mobilisation in the region and their integration in evolving politics at various levels. Many accounts of the region focus on the larger, more visible rebellions that took place from time to time. However, it has been increasingly realised that the history of struggle and resistance involves a flow and movement between these events and everyday forms of peasant resistance (Scott, 1985).

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\(^6\) Karad (earlier Karhakada) is one of the oldest known places of Satara District recorded in inscriptions dating around 200 BCE (GoM, 1964). It is located at the confluence of the Koyna and Krishna rivers.

\(^7\) The Karha River originates in Saswad taluka and flows eastward through Baramati taluka until it joins River Nira, a tributary of the river Bhima that flows through Satara, Pune and Solapur districts in Maharashtra (MPCB, 2006)

\(^8\) Please see Annexure 5.2 for distribution of the community by type of location.
The following sections explore the evolution and nature of mobilisation and protest in the region over time. Although peasant rebellion and protest were not unknown in earlier phases, the colonial, post-colonial and neoliberal phases of state construction and associated dispossession are considered here since they appear to form the points of relatively more drastic change in people’s relations with the environment in subsequent years, with increasing subservience of the region to external forces.

5.2 Colonial Rule and the Dynamics of Protest

The colonial period saw the introduction of new land settlements with the Khoti system predominating in the Konkan region. According to Khoti revenue farming arrangements in the Konkan, dharekaris (tenants) transmitted the revenue rate (dhara) through the Khots (revenue collectors) to the government, whilst ardhelis (half-crop share tenants) were both unpaid labourers for the Khots as well as ‘tenants-at-will’ (Rodrigues, 1998) on their lands. However lack of clear formal distinction between the two types of tenants led to considerable grounds for manipulation by the Khot. The Khoti system became increasingly exploitative with the change in revenue systems and property regimes introduced by the British that protected the wealthy landlords and led increasingly to land transfers in their favour, gradually dispossessing many of the poor cultivators in the region. Indebtedness became a major driving force in the stratification of peasant society. Increasing subdivision and fragmentation of holdings characterised the economy due to a combination of indebtedness, population growth and commercialisation in select areas aided by skewed development of trunk infrastructure and irrigation development. This process began in 1890 and accelerated in the decade of 1917 when holdings under five acres in the Bombay Presidency rose from 15 to nearly 20 lakhs (Rodrigues, 1998). The situation reached the level of a demographic-ecological crisis soon after the Depression that started in 1929. Thus the 1920s and 1930s were significant periods in which struggle took place, particularly in the coastal talukas (Charlesworth, 1985) of Konkan where the pressure on land was higher and peasant discontent was extensive. More severe levels of exploitation were facilitated by the heightened power of the Khots in these areas due to
lack of connectivity in the region and their monopoly over village records and revenues. Ryotwari coastal taluks of Kolaba where the majority of peasants were tenants who paid their rents in kind also evidenced similar tensions and discontent. Rents demanded in these areas amounted anywhere from one half to three quarters of the output in many cases.

Colonial efforts to create a class of capitalists for generating greater wealth were based on an economic and legal framework that promoted private property at the cost of ecological flows and inter-community relationships. Policies based on disjunction between field and forest, caste and tribe ruptured symbiotic community-environment relationships that first marginalised the already poor adivasi tribal communities. Withdrawal of colonial supports for maintenance of embankments and extraction of agricultural output combined to undermine the subsistence base of an already impoverished community. A series of dacoities by semi-hill tribes took place in the early phase of colonial rule from 1821 to 1873 (Rodrigues, 1998), all targeted at the money lender, and usually supported by other caste groups in the villages. These preceded the Deccan Riots of 1875 after which there was acceleration in the occurrence of grain riots and banditry that reached endemic proportions (Charlesworth, 1985) in western Indian agrarian society. The Koli gangs of Thane achieved notoriety at this time and Uran taluka had its own group of social bandits led by Barkhu Chirlekar of Chirner that began its reign of terror against usurious savkars in the late 1920s. The region had by this time become totally subservient to the requirements of the growing port city of Mumbai. Paddy and upland fields used for cultivation of millets and pulses were converted into grasslands to meet the demand for fodder from Mumbai.

The period from the 1880s to 1930s also saw the rise of the nationalist movement that was significantly supported by the industrialists and elite of Mumbai. Simultaneously there was a growing Non-Brahmin movement that began with the establishment of the Satyashodhak Samaj by Jyotirao Phule in 1873. The orthodox and extremist views of Tilak who dominated the Congress Party’s functioning until 1920 were seen as opposed to peasant interests and therefore had no roots in this region. The affiliation of the Uran peasantry with the Congress began with Tilak’s death and the more mass-oriented
leadership of Gandhi. Peasant resistance in the study region emerged in this context and was associated with some of the larger peasant protests in the Kolaba region. The two significant targets of struggles/protests in the study region from the 1920s to 1935 that are described below were seen to be the exploitative Indian savkars (money lenders) and secondly, oppressive legislation introduced by the British. Although the targets appear to be different, both represented a concerted effort to prevent dispossession of land and access to ecological resources in the region that was made imminent by colonial interventions.

5.2.1 Loss of Occupancy Rights and the Pen-Vashi Farmers’ Strike (1920-22):
Until the mid nineteenth century occupancy tenants in most villages in the Konkan maintained economic control and traditional prerogatives related to land sale and mortgage (Charlesworth, 1985). Colonial efforts to survey and settle land revenues to maximise returns however led to decreasing margins for the khots. The latter responded to this situation by curtailing tenant rights and even ejecting tenants at will whose length of tenure was likely to make them eligible for de facto occupancy tenant rights. The period between 1840 and 1920s – with the exception of a brief hiatus in the 1870s – was characterised by continuously rising prices that saw peasants become increasingly dependent on creditors. The increasing importance of production for the market was taking precedence over the subsistence and long-term food security of peasants. The influence of internal factors such as harvest performance was being superseded by external factors such as international price fluctuations and steady devaluation of the rupee. The tenants’ position was also increasingly undermined by the steady rise in population in the Konkan region but a decreasing availability of land to expand cultivation. Increasing numbers of tenants were losing their occupancy rights as the prevalence of share rents (where rent is paid in kind rather than cash) cumulatively favoured the landlord in terms of accumulation of assets and profits. Crop rents shifted the balance of economic power in favour of landlords as the latter used them as an appreciating asset (Charlesworth, 1985). Share rents were sold when maximum profits could be made from the market where prices fluctuated considerably through the year. New landlords also emerged as wealth amassed through trade and realisation of profits.
from land speculation in the city periphery led to large-scale takeover of land by traders
of Mumbai and Uran, leading to extremely skewed distribution of land ownership in the
taluka. Profits made from expanding and untaxed grasslands were a significant attraction.
Given their proximity to Mumbai city, in Thane and Kolaba districts particularly, many
land transfers were seen in favour of non-agriculturist land owners as large investments
were made by merchants and industrialists.

Peasants’ response to these conditions began with two small strikes at Roha and Vadhav
(Madhavi, 2013). In both places the Khots (landlords) put a swift end to the strikes. Far
from being subdued, peasants regrouped and stepped up the scale of their mobilisation.
Preparation for the Pen-Vashi strike that affected practically all the salt rice lands in Pen
taluka was begun in 1920 under the leadership of Hiru Mahadu Mhatre, an Agri peasant
from Vashi. The Khot’s efforts to compromise the strike with the support of
Balgangadhar Tilak were unsuccessful, largely due to the shift in leadership to Gandhi
after Tilak’s death on 31 July 1920. Gandhi was viewed by locals (Madhavi, 2013) as a
socialist while Tilak was seen as a supporter of Brahmins and their exploitation of the
Agris. A charter of agreement signed by sixty seven leaders of various villages was
drawn up in 1921 and contained the following conditions (Thakur, 2007).

1. Consumption and sale of liquor would be banned.
2. Nobody should till the land of others.
3. If a plot of land is to sold it should first be offered to the tenant.
4. If the tenant is not willing to buy it then it is open to others for purchase.
5. The panch should investigate the cause of the tenant’s inability to buy the plot and
   only then issue permission for third party transfer or purchase. Even after sale to a
   third party the original tenant must continue to be given cultivation rights.
6. Any issue related to land that concerns a fellow member of the same caste should
   be resolved by the concerned caste panchayat.
7. No relations whatsoever would be entertained with any individual declared as an
   outcast by the council.

This was a clear attempt to prevent further loss of occupancy rights and prevent
 dispossession of tenants from their land. Hundreds of acres remained uncultivated
(Charlesworth, 1985) as the Agris refused to cultivate Khoti lands for two consecutive
years. The strike finally ended with the intervention of the Collector in February 1922
through a reduction in the rent charged by the Khot from two-thirds of the produce to
half. The landlords were forced to sign an agreement to this effect (Patil, 2012). The effectiveness of the strike was in part attributed to the involvement of politicians who were members of the Legislative Assembly at that time as also the amount of media support it had through newspapers such as the Navayug (Charlesworth, 1985).

5.2.2 Colonial Monopoly over Salt Production and the Salt Satyagraha (1930):
The ecological conditions of the region were ideally suited for production of salt by solar evaporation and large tracts along the north Konkan coast were developed as salt pans. The earliest evidence dating from the 11th century A.D. indicates that Agri communities in coastal lowlands specialised in salt-land paddy cultivation during the monsoons and salt production from December to June. Salt was thus one of the key items of trade and sources of revenue along the West coast for several centuries. Most of the Bombay sea salt works were located within a 30 mile radius of Greater Bombay, of which the Uran salt works were among the most productive. Expansion of salt-land cultivation and salt works were undertaken under Mughal, Portuguese and Maratha rule leading to periodic in-migration of Agris with the required expertise. Due to the investment required for construction of embankments, reclamation of land and construction of salt works, wealthy Muslim and Marwari traders gradually acquired proprietary rights over the salt works.

Under the 1802 Treaty of Bassein the exclusive rights of the Peshwas were passed on to the British and therefore other than the inams or kauls (grant of occupancy under special conditions) granted by the Peshwas, all the salt works and the manufactured salt belonged to the government. At that time various systems of management and revenue from these works existed (Aggarwal, 1976). Some works were owned and managed by the government while others were given out on rent, and some were privately owned. Duty was variously levied on production from private works, import and export of salt by sea, and transit on land. Quit rents were levied in some cases while in others salt works were assessed for land revenue. Act 27 of 1837 was introduced to replace these irregular and complex arrangements in the production of salt with systematic licensing of salt works, penalties for ‘illicit’ manufacture and abolition of transit taxes. This piece of legislation brought in levy of regular excise tax from 1838 that was further strengthened with a new
Act in 1850 for better protection of salt revenues. Bombay State had as many as 682 salt works in the period 1850-1870. During this period the salt tax was rapidly increased\(^9\) by the government and reached increasingly exploitative levels. A British official’s plea in 1856 to reduce excise duties to curb smuggling and illicit traffic in salt went ignored and by the 1860s colonial officers discovered that the number of complaints of ‘accidents’, ‘overturning of boats in rough weather’ and ‘storms’ at sea had drastically increased, with partial and sometimes total loss of salt cargo being reported. Locals increasingly used their intimate knowledge of the terrain, creeks and sea to smuggle salt, facilitated also by enormous variations in salt prices and taxes in different provinces. Colonial rulers in turn began strengthening coastal and border protection and surveillance systems with severe penalties for anyone caught smuggling salt. While this succeeded to some extent, the local communities’ knowledge of the many smaller creeks and inlets made control of the uneven coastline an impossible task. The need for overseas markets for British salt also became an overriding imperative at this time. The transfer of control over Bombay Presidency from the British East India Company to the British Crown in 1858 saw the introduction of policies to shut down salt works and expand agricultural production. Between 1858 and 1872 about two-thirds of the salt works were brought under paddy cultivation. This saw a corresponding inflow of people from neighbouring areas/talukas that comprised mostly Agris who specialized in salt-land paddy cultivation.

Efforts to curb smuggling of salt made the costs of collection and control made the price of salt prohibitively high. The period from 1870 to 1930 saw attempts to reduce these costs through the abolition of inland customs lines and creation of a more uniform rate of taxation across the colonial provinces in India. This resulted in various fluctuations in the excise duties levied, increasing to Rs.2-8-0 on some occasions until it settled back at Rs.1-4-0 per maund in 1924. The first phase of civil disobedience under Gandhi’s direction had just ended in 1922 and had succeeded in enthusing youth all over the country including Uran (Mhatre, 1999) to join the freedom movement. Tukaram Hari Wajekar who later played a significant role in improving the conditions of salt pan

\(^9\) Excise duties of Rs.0-8-0 per maund levied in 1837 were increased to Rs.0-12-0 in 1844, Rs. 1 in 1859, Rs.1-4-0 in 1861 (to meet post-mutiny financial deficits), Rs.1-8-0 in 1864 and Rs.1-13-0 in 1869 (Aggarwal, 1976).
workers in Uran taluka was then a high school student at the Native Institute School in Uran. He and his friends were enthusiastic members of underground meetings taking place at that time as part of people’s mobilisation for independence from colonial rule. The second phase of civil disobedience began with the government’s rejection of all of Gandhi’s demands that had been submitted to the Viceroy in January 1930 (Tidrick, 2006). Abolition of salt tax constituted one of the eleven points\(^\text{10}\) in Gandhi’s charter of demands\(^\text{11}\).

By the end of February 1930 Gandhi had decided to begin the second phase of civil disobedience with the breaking of salt laws which he suggested could be done in various ways (Aggarwal, 1976): unlicensed manufacture of salt, possession and sale of contraband salt, purchase of contraband salt, collection of natural salt deposits from sea shores and hawking of the same. The salt march began on 12 March 1930 culminating at Dandi in Gujarat where Gandhi and his chosen band of followers deliberately collected salt from the sea shore. The movement to break salt laws spread all along the coastal areas of the country. In Thane district episodes of breach of salt laws were organised in every taluka of the district in April and May of 1930 (Madhavi, 2013). In Kolaba district salt strikes took place at Kalhe (taluka Panvel) and Chirner (Uran petha). Several leaders and party workers of the Indian National Congress including Wajekar, who was then running his business in Mumbai, actively participated in the strikes.

\(^{10}\) Tidrick (2006) considers this list to be a concoction with no coherent logic other than the possible appeasement of various factions whose support Gandhi wished to gain.

\(^{11}\) **Eleven Point List of Demands Submitted to the Viceroy by Gandhi**

1. Total prohibition (of alcohol)
2. Reduction of the sterling: rupee ratio to 15 4d
3. Reduction of the land revenue by at least 50 per cent, and its subjection to legislative control
4. Abolition of the salt tax
5. Reduction of military expenditure
6. Reduction of salaries in the Indian Civil Service
7. A protective tariff on foreign cloth
8. Passage of the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill
9. Discharge of political prisoners except those convicted of murder or attempted murder
10. Abolition of the CID or its popular control
11. Issue of licenses to use firearms in self-defence.

From local accounts it would seem that the common salt pan labourers did not participate\textsuperscript{12} in the struggle en masse as seen in other revolts despite salt production being such a significant source of livelihood in the region. The long history of monopoly control over salt works by rulers and the government had produced a sense of alienation unlike the sense of connection the people felt to privately-owned agricultural lands with ownership or tenancy rights; or the forests and grazing lands that were considered as commons integral to cultivation practices and livelihood in the region. The breaking of salt laws had little immediate effect on the salt revenue system for far from abolishing salt tax, excise duties were raised to Rs.1-9-0 with an additional duty of Rs.0-4-6 on all imported salt in 1931 (Aggarwal, 1976). The ‘settlement’ reached with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact\textsuperscript{13} did not make significant difference in the material conditions of salt pan workers. The pact only included what was “already prevailing” in terms of domestic consumption and administratively reduced security arrangements which were only in keeping with the attempts to cut costs from the previous decades. The salt strikes did however increase the fervour for civil disobedience in other areas. The ambience of resistance that had spread with the Dandi march led to a spontaneous uprising of the common peasants in the form of disobedience of forest laws.

5.2.3 Colonial Restriction to Forest Access and the Chirner Jungle \textit{Satyagraha} (1930): This was considered to be the first organised rebellion against the British in the region after that of 1857. The cordoning off and restricting access to forests had led to an economic crisis that fostered revolt. With establishment of government ownership over the best forests, the colonial forest legislation favoured contractors while it restricted and banned villagers from cutting grass, grazing their animals, or collecting minor forest produce that was integral to their livelihoods and survival. Mobilisation for civil disobedience with regards to forest laws began on 6\textsuperscript{th} April 1930 and built momentum with the onset of monsoons when the salt movement waned. This movement was marked by the participation of all caste and religious communities – cultivators and labourers – as one. It was also upheld as a revolt that had no elite leadership. The first deliberate

\textsuperscript{12} Participation of salt workers is likely to have been much higher in Gujarat where a large proportion of salt works were privately owned.

\textsuperscript{13} The clauses pertaining to these issues are given in Annexure 5.3
breaking of forest laws\textsuperscript{14} took place in Alibag taluka at Chari, Vadhav, Sahan and Phansapur (Patil, 2012) in August of the same year. The arrests of many villagers who took part in these actions motivated yet more people to join the struggle and contributed to building nationalist sentiments and therefore greater support for the independence movement.

The next round of peasant action to break forest laws occurred in the following month in Alibag and Pen talukas and another set of arrests were made. The criticality of people’s connections with both field and forest in a symbiotic relationship is apparent in the fact that civil disobedience with respect to the forest laws became yet more aggressive in subsequent actions that took place at Chirner, a part of Panvel taluka at that time. Chirner village is currently known as the cultural and economic capital of Eastern Uran (Thakur, 2007) and consists of seven settlements. This upland village had extensive salt and sweet lands together with a fairly large 415 hectare forest that was integral to peasant livelihoods. It is estimated (Patil, 2012) that five to six thousand people from Chirner and surrounding villages – Dhakti Jui, Moti Jui, Pandive, Dighode-Koproli, Bhom, Dhutum, Chirle and Jasai – gathered on 25\textsuperscript{th} September 1930 at the Akkadevi hillock and began climbing up into the forest, deliberately breaking colonial restrictions on their entry. Police began arresting and handcuffing the demonstrators leading to altercations and finally assault when the villagers brought out their sickles and axes and began cutting down trees. The \textit{Mamlatdar}\textsuperscript{15} of Panvel attempted to stop the mayhem but was caught in the crossfire and killed. Nine villagers lost their lives in the incident and 47 villagers had cases registered against them for retaliating with stones and beating up one of the Inspectors almost to death.

Despite the coming together of prominent Indian lawyers including B. R. Ambedkar to fight on behalf of the villagers, their conviction based on false evidence proved without

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\item Resistance to the oppressive forest laws was seen in several districts – Ahmednagar, Akola, Amravati, Chandrapur, Yavatmal, Nashik, Dhule, Jalgaon and Raigad.
\item The \textit{Mamlatdar} is the officer in executive charge of a taluka. His duties included groundwork for revenue orders and later their execution; preparation of \textit{jamabandi}, the audit and inspection of revenue accounts; collection of revenue, taxes and recovery of dues; \textit{quasi}-judicial duties which include: (i) inquiries and orders under the Mamlatdar’s Courts Act (II of 1906); (ii) the execution of civil court’s decrees; (iii) the disposal of applications from superior holders for assistance in recovering land revenue from inferior holders; and (iv) enquiry in respect of disputed cases in connection with the record of rights in each village; and finally, every Mamlatdar is \textit{ex-officio} the Taluka Magistrate of his taluka. (Maharashtra State Gazetteers at \url{http://ahmednagar.gov.in/gazetteer/gen_admin_mamlatdars.html})
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doubt that the judiciary was a mere instrument in the hands of the rulers. This lesson formed the basis of later social movements and their perspective with regard to the State and associated institutions such as the judiciary. In terms of direct outcomes however there were hardly any gains and one compilation (Madhavi, 2013) of the region’s struggles dismissed the civil disobedience actions related to salt and forest laws as being of no account and considered them an interruption in the work of farmers’ mobilisation against the Khots.

5.2.4 Excesses of the Khoti System and the Chari-Alibag Strike (1932-38):

When Gandhi’s call to a movement for passive resistance came, Narayan Nagu Patil had been in the middle of mobilising the peasantry to demand an end to the Khoti system in the region. Narayan Nagu Patil, was a local Agri leader who rose to prominence in the two decades following the Pen-Vashi strike. Hailing from Alibag, he was a teacher serving in a Panvel school at this time. The Khoti system had impoverished and exploited the tenants to the extent that they did not have even the basic necessities. ‘Sufficient grain for each family, adequate clothing, primary and technical education and health care as each one's birthright’ (Madhavi, 2013) was the sum of their demands. These efforts were rekindled on Christmas day in 1930 when actions under Gandhi’s call to passive resistance had died down. A series of meetings (Table 5.1) were organized in villages and taluka headquarters (Pen, Mangaon, Ratnagiri, Khed) that culminated in a gathering at Chari on 27 October 1932. This farmers’ meeting marked the beginning of widespread agitation in the region. The tenant farmers had taken care that the kharif crop had been harvested before they began their agitation.

When the Khots realised that their payments were not arriving, they took the help of the state to confiscate the grain kept in the tenants’ houses. The entire state machinery from the village talathi to the district level officials assisted and supported the Khots to do this. The peasants retaliated by not cultivating the fields for the next six years. It is noted (Madhavi, 2013) with some pride by the Agri community that the British in their record of the Chari struggle stated that in Maharashtra the Agris and Koshtis are the only two communities who do not back down until the job they began is finished. A settlement was reached in 1939 with the introduction of ‘ardhel’ in place of the earlier ‘tijai’ calculation.
used to determine the share to be paid to the *Khot*. Due to his leadership in this strike Narayan Nagu Patil is considered by some locals as the founder or father of the tenancy laws that came into being subsequently.

**TABLE 5.1**

**PREPARATION FOR THE CHARI-ALIBAG STRIKE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE OF FARMERS’ GATHERINGS</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>PARTICULARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 December, 1930</td>
<td>Pen</td>
<td>Kolaba district farmers’ conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6 February, 1931</td>
<td>Mangaon Taluka - Kelshi Sangam and Goregaon</td>
<td>Village level farmers’ meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 February, 1931</td>
<td>Mangaon</td>
<td>Mangaon taluka shetkari parishad with representatives from 50 villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 February, 1931</td>
<td>Chiplun, Ratnagiri district</td>
<td>1500 farmers participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 February, 1931</td>
<td>Mahad</td>
<td>Mahad Taluka Shetkari Sangh established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 May, 1931</td>
<td>Khed, Ratnagiri district</td>
<td>Acceptance of NN Patil’s leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 May, 1931</td>
<td>Khed, Ratnagiri district</td>
<td>Strengthened struggle decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 May, 1931</td>
<td>Tale, Mangaon taluka</td>
<td>Khots tried to put an end to or ban the farmers’ associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 June, 1931</td>
<td>Chiplun, Ratnagiri district</td>
<td>1000 farmers participated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 December, 1931</td>
<td>Ashtmi, near Roha</td>
<td>Farmers' conference during which there was a ban on NNP from making speeches, but the second rung leaders of the movement were in place and activists from Mumbai had also joined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 October, 1932</td>
<td>Chari</td>
<td>Conference to begin the farmers' strike was chaired by B.R. Ambedkar; Surendranath alias Surabhanana Tipnis, Bhai Anant Chitre, Dadasaheb Donde, etc. were also present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Madhavi, 2013)

The Independent Labour Party (ILP) was formed by B. R. Ambedkar in 1936, to fight injustice due to what Ambedkar called ‘the division of labourers’ i.e. caste – as different from the division of labour that he felt was the sole focus of the communists. Five of the ILP elected members were from the Konkan (Omvedt, 2004) one of whom was Anantrao
Chitre. The latter, together with Narayan Nagu Patil, had played an active part in the mobilization and formation of farmers’ associations fighting against the *khoti* system in the Konkan region. The ILP thus took up the fight against the *khoti* system in the Konkan as a political party. The fight that began in the 1930s led to the formation of a farmers’ union that was banned from 1932 to 1934. The Communist leaders of the time joined the struggle and the historic march at Chari was marked by the waving of red flags by 3000 peasants. Subsequently, the first bill for the abolition of the *khoti* system was tabled by B. R. Ambedkar in 1937 and under the banner of the ILP organized a rally of 20,000 tenant farmers to Mumbai in 1938, the ‘largest pre-Independence peasant mobilisation in the region’.

### 5.2.5 Exploitation in Ryotwari Areas and the Bhendkhal Farmer’s Strike (1939-1943):
This strike built on the legacy of Tilak’s no-rent campaign and the anti-*khoti* struggles that had been taking place in the Pen-Vashi and Chari areas. After the Chari strike N. N. Patil mobilised the Bhendkhal farmers with the assistance of a local leader, Tuliram Ramkrishna Thakur. They were tenants of the landlord named Bhiwandiwala and cultivated his lands under the 8/12 (*aatth bara*) system, where out of 20 maunds¹⁶ of rice, eight would go to the tenant and twelve to the landlord (Patil, 2012). Of the 252 acres of village land, 150 acres belonged to the landlord. The peasants’ consciousness of their exploitation partly came from the contrast in behaviour and actions of Bhiwandiwala as compared to Saudagar the other prominent landlord of Western Uran who was based on Nhava Island. Saudagar was known for his good treatment of tenants and various educational, training and health facilities established for the tenants (Madhavi, 2013). The tenants’ protest rested on their unfair share in the produce that started in the form of a strike in 1939. This went on for two years during which Bhiwandiwala responded by bringing in wage labour from outside. He was however unsuccessful as the salt lands required specialised knowledge of the complex irrigation and maintenance requirements for cultivation that the *Agri* peasants had acquired over centuries. The tenant farmers staged a fierce protest even in the face of torture and

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¹⁶ One *maund* was approximately 28 British pounds in the Bombay Presidency during colonial rule (James, 1840).
harassment and retaliated with counter-attacks. In the process one of the landlord’s local employees was killed. Cases were registered against 30-35 Bhendkhal villagers of whom four served sentences of three years each. Resolution finally came in 1943, after five years when the legal cases were settled, with concession of tenants’ demands by the landlord.

On condition of anonymity one respondent from Eastern Uran shared with a laugh that the night before the savkar or his representative came to collect his dues they cut some of the crop and caught some of the fish from the fields to compensate for the unfair share of produce that they received from the savkar. Such forms of individual resistance must have been part of what have been called the ‘hidden transcripts’ (Scott, 1990) and everyday resistance found in situations where exploitation and unequal power relations govern interactions. Here as seen elsewhere (Rodrigues, 1998) the colonial period in this region too was marked by numerous such individual and small-scale resistances and struggles that sometime developed into more organised mass-based struggles. The fear of dispossession due to legislative and revenue interventions under colonial rule provoked much of the protests whether they were targeted at the landlord-cum-money lender or at the British. From discussions in the field on the history of their struggles, it would also seem that the caste associations formed during colonial rule also served as platforms where participation in struggles in various places were known, connected and shared. The first Agri caste parishads in the Bombay Presidency were held in 1906 (Madhavi, 2013) with representation from Igatpuri, Shahapur, Badlapur, Neral, Kalyan, Mumbai, Vasai, Panje and 70 to 75 villages with no rail connectivity such as Panvel, Alibag, Pen, Hashivre, and Ranjankhar.

5.3 Post-Colonial Land Reforms and Assertion of Peasant Rights

Conditions of the people continued to be miserable in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The growing prominence of Mumbai and associated development of strategically linked rail-lines and shipping routes led to reorganisation of the city’s relationship with its
hinterlands. Peripheral areas lost their independent social, economic and diversified resource base as they became centres for extraction of primary produce and entry points for industrial products from the West. Uran ports became entirely subsidiary to the Mumbai port and production in this region was subservient to the city’s needs. Ironically, these changes were accompanied by the first and most important pro-peasant legislations drafted after provincial autonomy was granted in 1935. These were the Khoti Abolition Bill and the Bombay Tenancy Act of 1939. The latter had been implemented in a few selected areas of Bombay Presidency when World War II broke out. Efforts to extend the legislation to other areas of the Presidency were resumed only in 1946. With Independence in 1947 the legislation was reworked and the new, more comprehensive, Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act of 1948 was passed (Rodrigues, 1998). This piece of legislation was to be implemented along with the 1947 Bombay Prevention of Fragmentation and Consolidation of Holdings Act. Implementation of the former took place in the study region in the late 1950s as described earlier, bringing considerable benefits to many peasants who got full rights to their produce for the first time. Upland villages saw processes of internal land grab by the upper caste Marathas that continue to be the source of hostility in the region in current times. Legislation that aimed to reduce fragmentation, however, did not seem to have much effect there as also seen in the previous chapter. The extensive salt pans did not benefit from these legislations as salt production had been categorised as an industrial activity and production was almost entirely controlled by the government.

A group of seven friends17 who had done well in business or in formal jobs came together to enable the communities in their region (Patil, 2011) to improve their economic condition. Of these the most prominent and famous was Tukaram Hari Wajekar. Sudden penury on the death of his father in 1923 followed by dispossession of house and agricultural land after foreclosure on an outstanding debt by the local moneylender

17 J.K. Patil a BEST employee from Bokadvira village, Aknath Chinthaman Gharat with the salt pan business from Dongri village, Ramkrishna S. Bhagat an Indian Railways employee from Bhendkhal, K.R. Patil an Indian Customs Department employee from Bhendkhal village, Ganesh Laxman Patil who was an educator and the Chair of the Local Board from Pandive-Khopta, Bhaskar Mhatre from Funde village and finally Tukaram Hari Wajekar from Jaskhar (Wajekar’s family were originally from Waje, Panvel taluka) (Patil, 2011).
pushed him to drop out of school and take up wage labour in a bid to support his family. Unable to find a suitable job Wajekar decided to migrate to Mumbai. He tried various jobs – turner-fitter, book seller, footpath vendor, and lottery ticket seller. The latter brought contacts with the moneyed classes that led to his starting a business. By the end of a decade he had become the proprietor of a thriving business. His economic rise was accompanied by his increasing involvement in mobilisation of Agris in Mumbai for betterment of their community and in larger politics that led him to be a prominent figure in politics and the Indian National Congress. His home at Bhoiwada\(^\text{18}\) became a gathering place for the Agrî association as well as for the Congress Party. When tensions flared between Hindus and Muslims in Byculla in 1936, his efforts to defuse the situation was viewed with suspicion and he came under surveillance and repeated harassment by the police. Finally, Wajekar returned to Uran in 1946 after he was warned to either leave the city or face arrest.

At this time rising indebtedness and impoverishment of the peasantry associated with exploitation and deprioritization of the hinterland led to conflict and fragmentation of the region’s polity. The study region was characterised by frequent quarrels at individual, group and community levels largely due to conditions of grinding poverty, exploitation and competition for resources and work, particularly in the lowland villages. As Bourdieu (1999, p. 84) stated,

‘Competition for work tends to generate a struggle of all against all, which destroys all the values of solidarity and humanity, and sometimes produces direct violence.’

Recourse to police and judiciary invariably led to further impoverishment and dispossession due to indebtedness from expenses related to formal settlement. Wajekar’s return to the region coincided with an intense conflict between Jaskhar and Karal villagers that had begun a year or two before and escalated into continuous brawls and fistfights. Wajekar negotiated a settlement between the two communities and created a four-village\(^\text{19}\) association to prevent such protracted conflicts in future. Emerging solidarity and cooperation in the social landscape facilitated confrontation of the

\(^{18}\) Bhoiwada is located in Bhuleshwar of South Mumbai.

\(^{19}\) The four villages were Jaskhar, Karal, Sonari and Sawarkhar
economic structure that exploited them. The impact of this association was so visible that the neighbouring village communities also approached Wajekar and a larger sub-regional association of twelve village communities, the ‘Mahalan Sabha’, was formed. From the list of objectives\(^\text{20}\) of the association it would appear that most of the lowland conflicts stemmed from difficulties in meeting, or indebtedness due to, ceremonial and wedding expenses. The uplanders generally thought of the lowlanders (“those on the other side”) as more rough and uncultured (Patil, 2011). They were relatively better off having minor conflicts household issues. This researcher was told that land disputes rarely took place.

During his active involvement in the civil disobedience movements and freedom struggle Wajekar had become convinced regarding Gandhi’s ideas of Swaraj (self-government) and Gram Rajya (rule of the people), that were being projected as alternative pathways to a better future for the people. With the establishment of the Sabha (association) Wajekar began his own experiments with the idea of Gram Rajya (Patil, 1999). The idea quickly took root as other villages established similar associations (Mhatre, 1999) in their respective clusters – Pirkone (10 villages), Jasai (14 villages), Chirner (15 villages) and Nagaon (12 villages). People organised to improve conditions of work and wages that constituted the cause of their social conflicts. Demands for Wajekar’s assistance in setting up joint-village associations extended into the neighbouring talukas of Panvel (up to Pargaon and Owle) and Pen (up to Jite and Kharoshi). All these community associations were combined to form the Chaurainshi Gaon Shetkari Sanghatna (Eighty Four Village Farmers’ Association) organised into a four-tier structure for speedy rendering of justice and resolution of intra and inter-village conflict. The individual

\[^{20}\text{Objectives of the Mahalan Sabha (Association) [Source: (Patil, Navi Mumbai Prakalpagraasthanacha Abhuthpurva Shetkari Laddhal, 2009)]}\

1. To resolve all fights other than criminal cases of the twelve villages between themselves without going to the police.
2. To organise people as a collective.
3. To resolve that all religious rites and rituals related to weddings and funeral ceremonies of poor people will be conducted at low cost.
4. To reduce the customary three-day wedding celebrations to one day and stop the practice of feeding the entire village community.
5. To organise community weddings at the village temple with a charge of only Rs. 50/- per couple to meet expenses. Costs of refreshments for the marriage party would be met from this amount.
6. To determine a fixed rate of remuneration for the Brahmin priest who conducts religious ceremonies.
village community constituted the first tier, followed by the four-village association, the twelve (or ten or fifteen as the case may be) village association and finally, if the issue was still not resolved, the eighty-four village committee was called to pass judgement. Formation of the *Mahalan* association thus marked the beginning of a new phase of social transformation in the region. The associations led to collective mobilisation on a range of issues other than intra and inter-community conflicts. Exploitation by salt pan owners, traders and landlords were soon taken up for redress.

From the 18th century, during Peshwa rule, Parsi, Gujarati and Muslim traders started having control over the salt pans with the Muslim leaseholders predominating. Before he left for Mumbai to seek his fortunes Wajekar had briefly worked at the Sheva Salt Department Customs Office as a Weigh Clerk in the early 1920s. During his childhood in Jaskar village he had already seen and heard about the conditions of salt pan labourers as this village was surrounded by some of the largest salt works in the taluka. His employment as clerk brought direct experience of the exploitative system and its operation. Apart from misuse of power and ill-treatment of staff and labourers there was active collusion between salt pan owners and salt department officials to extract enormous profit by cheating the workers, paying wages that kept them at lower than subsistence levels. The weigh clerk who was responsible for weighing the salt, maintaining records and supervising the salt pan labour was usually offered a weekly bribe per *anna*21 of salt as well as food for the day to assist the owners in fudging records and/or entering fake measurements. Anybody who dared question the payment was kicked and beaten brutally in front of all other workers. Sexual exploitation of women was an additional weapon used to subjugate and control the workers.

Although Wajekar was a member of the Congress Party that paid lip service to socialism, in his own praxis there appear to be elements of socialist thought. Wajekar also appears to have drawn on his exposure to trade unions in the city of Mumbai. On 20 November 1946 the Uran Petha Mithagar Kamgar Sangh (Uran Subdivision Saltpan Workers' Union) was formed to counter the exploitative practice of the savkars and demand adequate wages or remuneration ‘to each according to their labour/work’ (Mhatre, 1999).

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21 One *anna* of salt was equal to 27 sacks weighing a total of 100 kilograms (Mhatre, 1999).
There were approximately 100 salt works in Uran taluka at this time with 600-700 labourers engaged in production, more than 200 labourers to fill sacks, 300 tenant salt producers, and about 300 boat crew engaged in transporting the salt to the depots (Mhatre, 1999). Apart from these workers there were between 800 to 1000 migrant labourers from Gujarat (kharvis). Repeated strikes were called in the salt pans from 1946 to 1949 and success in improving conditions came with a court judgment in their favour in 1949.

**Table 5.2**

**Outcomes of the salt pan workers' struggle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SALT WORKER CATEGORY</th>
<th>PRE-STRUGGLE WAGE</th>
<th>POST-STRUGGLE WAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weighment workers (hamals) (per 27 sacks of 100 kg. each)</td>
<td>Rs. 1 and 11 annas</td>
<td>Rs.4 and 20 annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighment workers (sack fillers) (per 27 sacks of 100 kg. each)</td>
<td>11 annas</td>
<td>Rs. 3 and 2 annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighment workers (shivnars) (per 27 sacks of 100 kg. each)</td>
<td>10 annas</td>
<td>Rs. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant salt manufacturers (annual payment)</td>
<td>Rs. 200</td>
<td>Rs. 400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Mhatre, 1999)

The next set of institutional reorganisations was the formation of cooperative societies that addressed another set of issues. Historically, the birth of cooperatives in India took place with the passing of the Cooperative Societies Act in 1904 (Kamat, 1985), a rather delayed provision that was based on the recommendations of the Deccan Riots Commission set up in 1875. However, the first attempts to form cooperatives in Uran taluka began with Wajekar’s work after 1946. In 1947 an inter-caste cooperative society – the ‘Agri, Koli, Karadi and Other Communities’ Multipurpose Cooperative Society’ – was registered to establish fair-price and ration shops, starting with Uran town and
subsequently throughout the taluka\textsuperscript{22}, to counter the manipulations of traders who controlled all goods sold in the region and were infamous for their arbitrary prices and adulteration (Mhatre, 1999). Grain, rations, cloth, coal and timber were the main essential items that became available to the people at lower prices and of better quality through these shops. On 20\textsuperscript{th} March 1948 the Uran Petha Mith Sampadak Sahakari Mandal Ltd. (Uran Petha Salt Collection Cooperative Society Limited) was also established. This was set up to create employment for unemployed youth of the Mahalan Division. Since this society was set up by the Mahalan Sabha, it was accountable to the association for all its business. The society established a new salt work called ‘Union Agar’ near Bhendkal village. This spurred a new phase of expansion in which people from other villages such as Khopta and Jaskhar set up new cooperative salt works. Other interventions in this period included the establishment of the Ganesh Maagaasvargiya (Backward Category) Housing Society in 1952 with 23 members belonging to the matang, charmakar and burud castes. Attempts were also made to modernise agriculture in the region to increase productivity and erase the paradox of a region known as the rice granary of the state but where farmers did not get enough to eat.

None of these interventions went without opposition or contestation. The salt pan owners, landlords, traders and moneylenders in the region made continuous efforts – individually and severally – to destroy the associations through litigation, rumour-mongering, character assassination, intimidation and attempts to injure and murder Wajekar. All these however failed and Wajekar’s widening influence and significant changes in the material conditions of the people saw a more tightening alliance of savkars, opposition leaders, government officials and police. They finally achieved some success with legal complaints alleging the formation of a parallel government by Wajekar following which he was arrested. Far from the expected collapse of the various associations and institutions during his incarceration, the people showed renewed vigour and he was elected unanimously to head the Zilla Local Board (Patil, 1999) while still in jail. Wajekar was released after eleven months of imprisonment and there was widespread celebration in the region.

\textsuperscript{22} Twelve ration shops were set up in different villages in the same year of 1947 (Mhatre, 1999).
The above success in challenging the local dynamics of domination can be attributed to the convergence of several key factors that were critical for micro-level social transformation (Pattenden, 2005). These were internal organisation, external support, placement of the dominant within existing political configurations, and shifts in the structural contexts of material and political reproduction. The process at this time was successful in integrating socio-political networks both horizontally as well as vertically. Existing village and the sub-regional leaderships were strategically strengthened. This was supplemented by identification and training of youth with a passion for community service and established trustworthiness (Mhatre, 1999). For example, Balwanth Aloji Kadu’s (Sonari village) (Mhatre, 1999) salt manufacturing skills played a significant role in the success of the salt collection cooperative society and Kadu came to be recognized as a salt expert in the region. The experiences narrated (Bhoir, 2011) by a member of the Karadi community who served as secretary from 1947 to 1965 of the eighty-four village association bear testimony to Wajekar’s success in building solidarity across different caste groups as well.

Wajekar’s involvement in the social transformation was also seen in his efforts to improve educational facilities in Uran taluka. Feeling keenly the inadequacy of his own education he made efforts to start primary schools in every village and also established middle schools at Funde (June 1964) and Pirkone. Until then the only middle school in the taluka was the Native Institute in Uran town which often rejected prospective students of the Mahalan area. Wajekar’s close personal relationship with the Chief Minister of the state, Yashwantrao Chavan enabled him to obtain official clearance for the establishment of the school within a day. Within three years of the middle school being run in Bokadvira village, Wajekar was able to persuade the people of Funde and Jaskhar villages to donate 11 acres of land to set up a campus for the middle school that soon expanded into a higher secondary school. The name of the school was changed from ‘Mahalan Sabha High School’ to ‘Tukaram Hari Wajekar Secondary and Higher

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23 The school was begun under the aegis of the Rayat Education Society (Mhatre, 1999). The Rayat Education Society was started in 1919 by the renowned activist Karmaveer Bhauroa Patil (Phadke, 2013). Yashwantrao Chavan was President of the Rayat Education Society in the 1960s.
Secondary School after Wajekar’s death in 1981. A college of arts, science and commerce was thereafter established in 1989 that was also named after Wajekar in 1994. Progress was believed to be possible only if society educated itself through formal education and Wajekar pushed Uran society to become educated and civilised. This was in keeping with ideas of progress that had been put forward by most of the social reformers[^24] of the country from the 19th century onwards. However, Rodrigues (1997) notes that radical socialist idioms were shrewdly used in ways that supported the rich peasantry’s domination of the key interactions between local communities and the colonial state, and their movement into political power after Independence. Wajekar’s gradual realization of this led to his shift to the Peasant’s and Workers’ Party (PWP) in 1957. Efforts to improve conditions of work, education, health and housing continued unabated until the 1970s when the decision was taken to take over more than half the taluka for the establishment of New Mumbai, the twin city of Mumbai. Here the impact of collective organisation of the people that took place between the 1940s and 1970s through cooperatives and unionisation was seen in subsequent mobilisations when the decision of the state government with respect to the immediate hinterland of the metropolis was announced.

### 5.4 Making of New Mumbai and Associated Struggles

The farmers of the 95 villages in Thane, Panvel and Uran talukas were notified regarding acquisition of their land in 1970. The immediate reaction of the region’s polity (Patil, 2009) was to form a Zameen Bachao Samyukth Laddha Samiti (Committee for Collective Struggle to Save the Land). The Committee was headed (Patil, 2012) by D.B. Patil (locally known as ‘Diba’ Patil) who was its President, Tukaram Hari Wajekar its Vice-President and Janardhan Atmaram Bhagat (representative of the Nhava-Gavhan area) its Secretary. The Committee called for its first historic rally at Jasai in 1971 where the agitated farmers, agricultural labourers, and salt pan workers of Uran, Panvel and Belapur

[^24]: For example Syed Ahmed Khan, Jotirao Phule, G.K. Gokhale, B.R. Ambedkar among others.
belt unanimously rejected the state’s decision of land acquisition. The militant mood of the people was quite obvious (Patil, 1995).

Two types of struggles were seen in the region after this pan-village gathering. One consisted of a series of localised oppositions constituted by individual villages or groups of four to five villages that began from 1971. Personal (Mhatre, 2012) and newspaper (Mendonca, 2011) accounts indicate that such agitations continue to take place till date as PAP issues have remained unresolved. These resistances that took the form of road blocks, disruption of work, etc. were the direct responses to the locale-specific decisions of the government at different phases of implementation of the New Mumbai development plan, e.g. land surveys of notified areas, landfills, infrastructure development, etc. With passage of time and progress of the new city project, the dominant sites of resistance shifted from Belapur area in the early 1970s to Uran and Panvel talukas in the late 1970s and 1980s as land surveys, acquisition and other works started taking place in these areas. Local leaders perceive (Patil, 2010) the Thane area as having been the weakest link in the collective struggle where establishment of the Thane-Belapur industrial belt in the 1960s had already destabilised eco-system based livelihoods and disrupted the community based management of the environment. Such demoralisations with reduced capacity of mobilisation by communities and workers are seen in many other regions where livelihoods are disrupted and insecurity ranges high (Bourdieu, 1999). Despite their reduced capacities, however, even in the Thane-Belapur belt some community resistance was seen. In 1971 when land surveys of the entire area were done, agitations were reported (Shaw, 2004) at Kalwa, Vashi, Ju, Belapur, Darve, Karave, Nerul, Khoparkhairane, Ghansoli and (Patil, 2005) Bokadvira.

Some researches hold the view (Shaw, 2004) that there was an initial phase from 1970-79 when agitations were local in nature, followed by another phase from 1980-86 when agitations ceased to be local as they developed the ‘support of the entire Navi (New) Mumbai region’ and had the ‘attention of the entire state’ (Ibid, pp.202). Such views appear to unquestioningly adopt frames of analysis used in understanding colonial struggles that no longer apply. Collective mobilisation and identity had already developed with the establishment and autonomous functioning of sabhas from the late 1940s to the
1960s. Mobilisation of the entire region’s polity against the proposed land acquisition thus began in 1970 itself. It is no surprise that Diba Patil who headed the mobilisation in this phase remarked (Mhatre, 1999) that the formation of the Mahalan Sabha was in his view the most significant contribution of Wajekar towards social transformation in the region. The various localised instances of resistance were seen to be interspersed with mass demonstrations and representation (Table 5.3) from the entire region that took place intermittently from 1970 to 1985.

These mass resistances constituted a second type of struggle by the PAPs. The frequency and intensity of pan-village mobilisations clearly increased in frequency and intensity from 1978-79 and into the first half of the 1980s. From various PAP respondents’ accounts it would appear that forced acquisition with increasing police presence took its toll by 1978. This was supplemented by the demoralisation that set in due to several farmers surrendering their land after succumbing to fear, poverty and/or alleged bribes from some officials. From this point onwards the discourse of compensation appeared in PAP representations. Diba Patil delineated the entire period of struggle from 1970 to 1986 as the first phase of resistance (Patil, 2009). This ended in failure to prevent land acquisition but succeeded in ensuring significant policy decisions with respect to compensation and rehabilitation. The second phase of struggle began in 1986 and continued into the twenty first century with the aim of ensuring proper implementation of the policy taken in the first phase and effective rehabilitation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>GOVERNMENT ACTION</th>
<th>PEOPLE'S RESPONSE</th>
<th>DEMANDS</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Acquisition notices issued</td>
<td>Formation of Zameen Bachaav Samyukth Laddha Samiti</td>
<td>No acquisition</td>
<td>Acquisition attempt failed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Assembly and political leaders brought by CIDCO to see progress</td>
<td>Mass demonstrations on all roads of Uran</td>
<td>Cancel acquisition of gaonan lands and fields</td>
<td>Acquisition of gaonan lands cancelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Attempts to take over land with police and SRP assistance with base in Panvel</td>
<td>Mass demonstration at Ulwe village</td>
<td>No acquisition</td>
<td>Resistance failed due to sell out by some farmers; shift in demand from no acquisition to just compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Sale of acquired lands by CIDCO for huge profits</td>
<td>Protests organised to demand a share of the profit</td>
<td>Share of profit from CIDCO land sales to the PAPs</td>
<td>Payment of Rs, 15,000 per acre approved by Chief Minister Sharad Pawar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Decision that Rs. 15,000 will not be paid for marshlands</td>
<td>Mass demonstrations at Jasai village</td>
<td>Equal compensation for uplands and lowlands</td>
<td>Police lathi charge and firing led to many injured; Chief Minister Antulay agreed to equal compensation due to moral pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>GOVERNMENT ACTION</td>
<td>PEOPLE’S RESPONSE</td>
<td>DEMANDS</td>
<td>OUTCOME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>CM Babasaheb Bhosle ordered negotiations between PAPs, elected representatives and CIDCO</td>
<td>Representatives participated in negotiations that went on for three months from 6 September to 2 December</td>
<td>Minimum price per acre of Rs.40,000 and 8% compound interest</td>
<td>Initial agreement and decision to put the matter up for final approval stalled due to change of CM and denial of agreement by CIDCO HEAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>CM Vasantdada Patil called for negotiations due to urgent requirement of land for Nhava-Sheva port</td>
<td>Refused to negotiate</td>
<td>Pressed for payment as per last discussion with during Bhosle’s tenure</td>
<td>Government refused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Government declared Rs. 22,000 per acre</td>
<td>Leaflet was prepared by D.B.P.; Massive rally to Uran on 22 January</td>
<td>Pressed for payment as per last discussion with during Bhosle’s tenure</td>
<td>Government declared Rs. 27,000 per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Acquisition by force planned; firing at Sheva village injuring two women on 13 January; crackdown on activists; troops of 10,000 police and SRP brought in and 500 police in reserve; 16 January declared as day for acquisition</td>
<td>Huge conference of PAPs at Jasai on 8 January; despite absence of leaders and heavy security mobilisation was done and thousands emerged on 16 January to court arrest</td>
<td>Just compensation</td>
<td>Firing at Dastan Phata left 2 dead and 23 injured of which 6 were handicapped for life; countless PAPs were injured in the lathi charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Visits and enquiries by elected representatives and Opposition party members - Sharad Pawar, Datta Meghe, Mrinal Gore, Ahilyatai Ranganekar</td>
<td>PAPs of Mahalan Division came out on the roads en masse on 17 January</td>
<td>Just compensation</td>
<td>Firing was repeated and 3 more PAPs killed;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>GOVERNMENT ACTION</td>
<td>PEOPLE’S RESPONSE</td>
<td>DEMANDS</td>
<td>OUTCOME</td>
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<td>------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Uran made national headlines</td>
<td>City, state industrial centres and regional shutdown observed on 31 January; massive rally to taluka place (Uran); demonstration outside Vidhan Sabha</td>
<td>Adequate compensation</td>
<td>Government retracted their earlier declaration and agreed to negotiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Chief Secretary, Ram Pradhan, was given the responsibility of negotiation with PAPs</td>
<td>PAPs took the assistance of Opposition minister Sharad Pawar in the negotiations</td>
<td>Adequate compensation</td>
<td>Rate of Rs. 30,000 was fixed and landmark scheme to give back a portion of developed land to PAPs announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Compensation for land acquired continued to be given at earlier low rates and a government order was issued by Chief Minister Shivajirao Nilangekar to demolish houses of PAPs with the assistance of police forces</td>
<td>Mass agitations, rallies and demonstrations organised; strategy of village-wise representation on a day-wise rotation basis introduced</td>
<td>Adequate compensation</td>
<td>Compensation rate of Rs. 25,000 per acre and grant of developed plots amounting to 12.5% of land acquired agreed to by the government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The localised agitations did not cease in the 1980s. Rather, documentation of the nature of participation and struggles of the New Mumbai PAPs\(^{25}\) shows that in Uran taluka they actually intensified in the late 1970s and 1980s. It appears that although individual village agitations and responses were seen as contributions to the larger struggle (Patil, 2005) there were communication gaps in the region in the early 1970s. For example, the Bokadvira community felt they were the only ones that resisted the notified area surveys that were being conducted under police protection in 1971. The physical requirements of the projects for communication and basic infrastructure became a point of vulnerability for the State. The typical strategy of people’s agitations was to bring all project earthworks to a standstill at the village boundary (in the case of a road or pipeline) or on the site within the village boundary. They would refuse to allow any further work unless the concerned company agreed to their demands. Until the mid-1980s PAPs were successful in pushing their demands for monetary compensation and employment by obstructing the working of projects on the ground and negotiating directly with the companies concerned. It is in this context that ONGC evolved a village development scheme towards village upkeep and development activities for Nagaon village. Very little could however be achieved through this scheme as fragmentation of the local community due to highly uneven employment opportunities and politically driven subcontracting business left most of these funds completely unspent for years together.

Consideration of government response to both types of struggles shows that the 1980s marked the beginning of escalation in state repression and the use of violence against people. Mass demonstrations held at Jasai village in 1981 to demand equal compensation rates for uplands and lowlands were met with a brutal police lathi charge and firing. CIDCO had begun selling off plots of acquired land for huge profits and in response to people’s demand for higher compensation Sharad Pawar, the then Chief Minister, agreed to a compensation rate of rupees fifteen thousand per acre. Subsequently, shortly after Antulay had taken over as Chief Minister, a caveat was introduced to the effect that low-lying salt lands would not be compensated at these rates. Despite teams of Special Reserve Police (SRP) being sent into the region to intimidate the villagers, thousands

\(^{25}\) Please see Annexure 5.3 for details of mobilization by CIDCO PAPs in western Uran from 1970 to 1990
gathered on 19th June 1981 at Jasai village to demonstrate. This was tackled by the state through large-scale violence. Besides the injured PAPs included leaders like Diba Patil, MLA D. R. Patil and Janardhan Bhagat, (EPW, 1984) there were many injured women, children and elderly who had been indiscriminately beaten up by the police (Patil, 2012).

When this incident failed to make the PAPs withdraw their demands additional troops of about 10,000 police and SRP were brought into the area and stationed at Panvel (Patil, 2009). Plans had been finalised transfer 2,500 hectares to the Central Government for establishing a port at Nhava-Sheva. State violence now achieved new heights. Restrictive orders were placed on many villages and reinforced by heightened police presence. Subsequent police firing on unarmed women and children in one village only strengthened the PAPs’ resolve to agitate and show their outrage. Thousands of PAPs came out on the roads of Uran and courted arrest on 16th and 17th January 1984, the days announced for takeover of land by the government. Police firing on these two days killed five of the PAPs and left many injured. To add insult to injury court cases were registered (Patil, 2012) against forty eight PAPs under sections 353, 153, 188, 427, 147, 148, 149, 336, and 337 of the Indian Penal Code.

The concurrent incident of ‘Balu Navra’ (the groom Balu) has since become a legend in the region. In order to evade the police cordonning, members of Nagaon village came up with the plan of forming a decoy wedding procession that would enable them to join the demonstrators at Jasai village. Balu, a Bhandari agricultural labourer volunteered to play the role of the bridegroom. The procession successfully travelled four kilometres but having received a tip off from one of their local informants, the police caught them at Funde village, surrounded the marriage party and mercilessly beat up the unarmed women, children and men who had been part of it. Respondents from Sheva, Panje and Nagaon still recall the victims’ frantic attempts to flee the assault. Ironically, several accounts (Shaw, 2004) of resistances in this phase opined that protests launched by the people during the 1980s became violent. In reality, despite provocation by the Sate, PAPs did not abandon their Gandhian notions of peaceful struggle and resort to armed resistance instead.
Questions were raised by officials and the press (Shaw, 2004) regarding the motivation for struggles in the New Mumbai region and possible instigation by vested interests from outside, that *benami* landholders (Parasuraman, 1995) were keen on raising the price of compensation and directing the struggle for their own profit. Although there was considerable support from members of the PWP and other political parties in the struggle, the undisputed leader of struggle in the region has been Diba Patil. Interaction with PAPs and local leaders including the late Diba Patil has helped in locating the cause of struggle in people’s socio-economic rootedness in the region associated with livelihoods and history of their mobilisations in the previous decades. It is perhaps not surprising thus to find that among the surveyed households those who did not join the struggle belonged to upper caste and/or class segments in the region. In one of his recent accounts Diba Patil (2009) notes at the outset – and with some bitterness – that there was a section of the people who did not participate in or agree with and even derided the resistance movement, but who did not hesitate to take as much as they could from the benefits that came as direct outcomes of the same.

These were among those with larger landholdings and the emerging elite in the region. Individuals who were already employed in the formal sector and lived in Mumbai reported being frequently contacted by government officials such as the District Collector and others to mediate on behalf of the state with the villagers. It was found that majority of the respondents who had a rooted existence identified completely with resistance to land acquisition. It is also important to consider New Mumbai resistance as part of larger struggles and not in isolation. It coincided with completion of a decade of struggle by oustees of the Koyna Dam. Affiliation to the Maharashtra State Committee for Project-Affected and Dam-Affected People provided a wider canvas to struggles against development induced displacement and dispossession at the local level. The appalling conditions in which the Koyna PAPs were living were known to leaders of the New Mumbai struggle. Thus the agreement by the government to cancel acquisition of

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26 Diba Patil was a member and Vice-President (1975) of this Committee.
27 This researcher had occasion to participate in a demonstration and rally organised by the Koyna PAPs in the early 1990s where it became clear that after thirty years of struggle villagers had been displaced no less than three times and ‘rehabilitated’ at sites with no water, electricity, school or health facilities.
gaothan lands in 1972 was considered the first and one of the most important achievements of the New Mumbai struggle.

However, several respondents opined that the decision not to accept the land acquisition notices and file their objections through legal channels was not proper. They felt that given his qualification and experience as a lawyer Diba Patil should have advised them differently. He was also blamed for accepting the formulation of the 12.5% Scheme by CIDCO in which they clearly abdicated any responsibilities towards the JNPT PAPs. Also, consideration was not given to the fact that the JNPT Chairman had issued a letter claiming responsibility for the JNPT-affected villagers. There was also disagreement among PAPs regarding the coordination committee’s decision to levy payment of one percent from the compensation money towards expenses incurred for the collective struggle. Some also felt that if undeveloped plots from JNPT had been accepted, the issue of 12.5% plots for JNPT PAPs would have been resolved much earlier.

Despite all these it was found that across the board, even among those who had bitter clashes with him, there was universal regard, deep affection and respect for Diba Patil as a leader. Stories regarding the selflessness, commitment and leadership qualities of both Diba Patil and Wajekar abound in the region as they contribute to developing, maintaining, (re)valorizing and reconfiguring both popular and personal histories and memories. Selbin (2010, p. 82) notes that such ‘ideals and idealizations are powerful and compelling in a world where people’s daily lives reflect relatively few of these’. Stories, poems and songs celebrating leadership, sacrifices, martyrdom on the one hand and decrying the destruction of relationships and nature such as ‘Rakth Ha Sandalai Ra’ (He has Spilt Blood) (Gharat, 2011) and ‘Paapache Ojhe’ (The Burdens of Sin) (Khilare, 2011) work together to refashion the past, explain the present and create possibilities to change. These therefore contribute to and underpin the process by which people ‘move into and through resistance, rebellion and revolution’ (Selbin, 2010, p. 72).

5.4.1 Shifting State-Society Relations: Reconstruction of Popular Resistance:
Paradoxically, while the 1984 deaths of PAPs generated state-wide support that did bring certain concessions to be accepted, increasing callousness from the government in terms
of rehabilitation of PAPs was also a simultaneous feature. A hardening stance is seen, for example, in negotiations that took place between affected villagers and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL), depicting increasing centralisation in state decision making processes. In previous clashes the PAPs were able to negotiate directly – and fairly successfully – with representatives of the concerned state or central level corporations. This was in part perhaps a consequence of the wider context in which (Bhaduri, 2009) technological advances were making increasing numbers of the labour force redundant within the industrial sector. In the BPCL case representatives refused to negotiate on the issue of increase in jobs offered to PAPs and drew district and state level government officials into the process. For JNPT PAPs, subsequent to their being given assurance by JNPT regarding compensation in terms of employment and allocation of developed plots, ultimately nothing materialized as the Central Government and the concerned ministry did not accept it.

The late 1980s therefore saw the beginning of delays in settlement of rehabilitation and compensation and related decisions being tossed between national and state level authorities. The 2010 Supreme Court judgment28 on the matter reversed the 2004 judgment of the High Court that had been in favour of the PAPs. It clearly indicates the disadvantages faced by communities with inadequate access to financial resources and legal expertise. The shift in the level of negotiation excluded a bulk of the PAPs from participating in the process of negotiation and made the interactions between state and polity increasingly unequal. The shift also necessitated involvement of higher level political leaders in the people’s struggles. This in turn facilitated the entry of business-political party-government nexus in people’s politics.

The village community of Bokadvira is bitter with the results after their commitment to resistance and show of strength in every struggle starting from 1971. Although quite a few of them got permanent jobs – many are now retiring – through their tireless struggles, their losses far outweigh the benefits as key developmental projects have been located in the neighbouring village, Bhendkhal. The significance of this is that although CIDCO has

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28 Judgment dated January 20, 2010 by the Supreme Court of India Civil Appellate Jurisdiction on the Civil Appeal No(s) 1333 of 2005 concerning CIDCO versus Nilesh Dattaram Pathare and Others.
acquired all the lands, the companies located within the boundaries of an erstwhile village have to pay a substantial annual fee to the respective panchayat. Expected ‘benefits’ from each project include employment, contracting business and rent for use of village space which is as per provision in the Gram Panchayat Act. Most if not all the benefits go to the villages where projects are established. Even for these villages the larger impact of the projects on the community and ecology has been detrimental. What is given to them is overshadowed by the scale of displacement and dislocation from erstwhile productive livelihoods and social supports. Besides, any employment or/and payments given to the locals is conceded almost grudgingly and only after prolonged struggles by the displaced village communities. As seen in the previous chapter, only a minority of PAPs get these openings and those who do are placed at the bottom-most rungs of new organisational structures. Communities do not have a choice in the placement of these projects over which they also have no control. Villages with no projects officially get no benefits. Such pattern of location of projects develops new hierarchies among the PAP communities and leads to further fragmentation and an unequal competition for resources and employment. Informal gangs are found to emerge that intimidate companies into earmarking a negotiated proportion of jobs for villagers when the company is setting up its office(s) in the region. It appears that offspring of earlier leaders of panchayat or village associations as well as unemployed youth of the village patronised by political parties form the basis of these groups. This perhaps constitutes a new form of social banditry to protest people’s exclusion.

Projects in Western Uran began in the late seventies with the establishment of ONGC at Nagaon village. Projects however started coming up in an extremely skewed manner in terms of time and physical location. The timing depended on the outcome of political compulsions and followed the usual ‘economic’ logic of minimising costs and maximising locational advantages like access, infrastructure and resource availability. Related projects got established in clusters to maximise connectivity and improve cost-benefit ratios. Thus ONGC, located at Nagaon Village has all its related business and offices within or next to the plant, with one other facility located at Nhava. All these privileged Uran town and the villages located in close proximity to Nagaon village. The
JNPT project has also generated establishment of facilities next to the main port at Sheva and along the routeways connecting the Mumbai-Pune highway. Maximum benefits have gone to a cluster of four villages near Sheva – Jaskhar, Karal, Sawarkhar and Sonari. Such skewed establishment does not make logic for a one to one ‘land for job’ policy. More so, none of the individual projects gave adequate thought to the situation of local communities directly impacted. With no clear indication in rehabilitation policy regarding benefits and employment generation for PAP households, the same has led to a state of cumulatively unequal access in which the power of location, threat of violence and politico-economic status dictate the process. Parity in the generation of employment for the displaced population played absolutely no role in planning these projects. Thus the directly affected villagers were pushed into the level of either beggars and/or local mafia in order to get benefits.

Field work for the present research began in 2011 with the researcher’s participation in a strike at the now famous Karal Phata (crossroads) that ended with an organised shutdown the following year. The location has achieved a strategic significance (as a place of demonstration as it is the meeting point of the road to JNPT, access to Eastern Uran and the road to Uran town) for the shutdown of all business operations in the region with resultant losses of regular port business of nearly Rs. 400 crore (DST, 2012) per day. Such strikes have become almost an annual feature in the last decade as problems of the PAPs have mounted, their demands continuously ignored or/and government promises of action indefinitely postponed. By the turn of the century the second generation of PAPs have come up with demand for livelihoods, adding to the previous backlog of unemployed and partially employed PAPs. By 2004 the urgency of the situation was realised and the proactive villagers of Bokadvira village came together again to put forward a charter of demands as listed below (Patil, 2005).

1. Preference should be given to PAPs in all recruitments to the CIDCO office.

2. A Central Warehousing Centre (CWC) or Container Freight Station (CFS) should be established within the village boundary.
3. For all plots allotted under the 12.5% scheme in the Bokadvira area, the original land owners should be given preference in the CWC, CFS and godowns located in the allottee’s village. This should be implemented only after local employment demand from that PAP village has been fulfilled.

4. All houses built outside the designated gaothan boundary\textsuperscript{29} should be regularised without connecting this to the 12.5 percent scheme allotments. The Gaothan Extension Scheme\textsuperscript{30} (GES) should be implemented.

5. The village area to be designated for allotment of plots under the 12.5% scheme should be decided, surveyed and demarcated. The development work of these plots should be given to unemployed youth in the village.

These demands clearly implied the need for location policies of projects keeping in mind the livelihood displacement and rehabilitation needs of the PAP population. The villagers decided to communicate these demands by marching to the Taluka Office located three kilometres away from their village. Although the villagers were promptly called for a discussion to the CIDCO office at Belapur most of their demands were watered down. With regard to the establishment of container yards and godowns CIDCO declared that they were not in a position to establish such facilities but would be willing to provide training for youth that would enable them to get employment in the proposed New Mumbai Special Economic Zone (NMSEZ). Considering the evidence of SEZ employment generation so far – the lack of it is more appropriate – this was a fairly

\textsuperscript{29} Villagers claim that the last demarcation of their village boundary was done based on a survey in the early 1960s.

\textsuperscript{30} The Gaothan Expansion Scheme (GES) was initiated in 1986. In this scheme 10% of the land acquired from a village is to be reserved for development and returned back to the villager. In this 10% reserved land; 50% of land is given to the villagers and rest 50% is used to develop roads, social facilities, open spaces, etc. Developed plots allotted to PAPs ranged from 100 sq.m. to 500 sq.m. Landless labourers, salt-pan workers and village artisans whose livelihood depended on the rural activities that existed before CIDCO acquired the lands, were entitled to a minimum of 40m2 plot under this scheme. The lands reserved for GES were around the existing gaothans. The GES benefited small number of beneficiaries and within 4 years, only 27 Ha. land was allotted covering 7 villages. The GES was closed in 1990. Source: CIDCO http://www.cidco.maharashtra.gov.in/RM_GaothanExpansionSchemet.aspx
empty proposal. The training facility located opposite Bokadvira village was subsequently embroiled in scandal and allegations of massive misuse of funds.

CIDCO passed the responsibility of the Gaonthan Extension Scheme (GES) onto the state government saying that the consideration of the scheme was still pending at Mantralaya. However, immediate regularisation of houses outside the gaonthan boundary was offered if the concerned PAPs were willing to give up their claims to 12.5% plots. CIDCO requested the villagers to allow them to survey the number of houses that had been built outside the gaonthan boundary. Demarcation of an area for allotment of 12.5% plots would be considered if PAPs were willing to combine their plots for business purposes. CIDCO did agree to give the tenders for 12.5% plot development work to the unemployed village youth but this would have no value until the actual plots were allocated. In the planning of New Mumbai, as perhaps in all development planning, a fundamental characteristic lies in the tendency for the State to imagine that once land is acquired it becomes a ‘blank slate’ for it to write on. The history and ecology of the particular landscape are forgotten and at times deliberately erased. The inevitable and continuous rupturing of the blank slate caused by resistance and/or rejection of the imposed development plan by local project affected communities serves as an endless source of irritation for planners.

The situation in the region mirrors the larger reality of a nation where for ten million new entrants into the labour force each year, just five million jobs are created (Anderson, 2012). Maharashtra is one of the two states in the country with the slowest rates of growth in terms of creating either non-agricultural or manufacturing jobs (Bhaduri, 2009). While this has generally resulted in overcrowding in agriculture or/and resort to the unorganised sector, within this region – apart from limited availability of jobs even in the informal sector – scope for any alternative is completely wiped out as current interventions devastate the physical and social landscapes. In Uran the landscape imagined by the state requires the obliteration of wetlands. The priority appears to be in making the area suitable for maximisation of space available for real estate speculation.

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31 The plan for vocational training was revived again in 2013 with the idea of mollifying agitations by villagers who are due to be displaced by the new airport in New Mumbai. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences has been appointed as a partner and consultant in this venture.
that has already begun to generate enormous profits for developers and real estate companies. This in turn requires the extensive quarrying of available hills and uplands for material to undertake landfills. Quarrying in this region has been extremely beneficial for container yards as levelled areas become ideal sites for their establishment (Plate 5.1).

**PLATE 5.1**

Quarries in operation and container yards at abandoned quarry sites at Jasai village; Source: [https://maps.google.com/](https://maps.google.com/)

Unlike lowland sites that require extensive landfills before they can be used the space left after quarrying provides a ready ground for parking trucks and storing large containers. Quarries and container yards are thus found concentrated in the upland areas and along the main routeways such as the JNPT road and state highway number 54 where it runs parallel to the former (Plate 5.2). It has already been seen in other researches (Maringanti & others, 2012) how the destruction of the larger eco-system by a single quarry can affect a range of people who are not recognized and are inevitably displaced and dispossessed.
Similar displacements occur in the case of other commons – creeks, rivers, forests, and seashore – that are destroyed by the combined impact of unregulated extraction and pollution. Establishment of industries in the Patalganga river basin in the 1960s during the first phase of the regional development saw the beginning of water pollution in the region that continues unabated. A combination of upstream industrial waste, sewage and waste water discharge from Mumbai city and discharge from ships at JNPT port – mostly untreated and unregulated – irrevocably destroys aquatic habitats of fish and various other aquatic creatures. Sand mining from sea shore and river beds in Uran has a long history. Although location of large scale sand mining has shifted temporarily out of the taluka, in the absence of alternative livelihood options, local sand mining continues to take place for individual and minor construction purposes despite government bans. Livelihoods of fisher folk, cultivators and labour connected to these commons continue to be destroyed.
In these processes one would not find a clear demarcation of traditional user and external exploiter. Leases for quarrying of hills in Uran have been taken up by locals as well as outsiders. Similar is the case of sand quarrying. Locals report that forest lands are being actively quarried with the connivance of Forest Department officials. Legal licenses obtained serve as an entree in the area. Once a base is established, multiple sites for illegal mining and extraction are developed in the vicinity. Gradually one or two companies and individuals with the right connections in official circles establish a monopoly over the resource, taking forward a government-business nexus that further encourages operation of local mafia to protect their interests. Such processes are reported from various other regions also in the country (DTE, 2012). The sentiments of the locals regarding the changing socio-economic landscapes in the study region after acquisition are aptly expressed in a poem\textsuperscript{32} composed by a PAP of Jaskhar Village.

\begin{verbatim}
I am a project affected woman; tears do not stop flowing from my eyes

Now the government says, nobody walk there
Fertile fields like emeralds, salt pans like shiny pearls
Outsiders have become owners, the erstwhile owners thieves
Memories lead to tearful eyes, who will wipe them dry?

The gutters of buildings flow through our villages
The rivers are gone, the streams have gone, even the ponds are filled in
Landfills fall on our coastal salt lands
The jitada\textsuperscript{33} has now disappeared

I am a project affected woman; tears do not stop flowing from my eyes…
\end{verbatim}

The paddy fields that the poet’s family used to cultivate were filled in as part of the plot on which the JNPT Township was established. None of her family members are employed in JNPT. One son works for a local contractor while the other survives on various odd jobs. The poet supports her family with her pension as a retired primary school teacher.

The tenor of people’s mobilisation has changed as leaders of political parties who have always been the main mobilisers of people’s resistance, become increasingly connected

\textsuperscript{32} These are excerpts. For the entire poem, see Annexure 5.4.
\textsuperscript{33} The \textit{jitada} is a tasty fish for which this region was famous, but is now hardly found.
to the processes of accumulation by dispossession in the neoliberal era. The politics of difference in the region has increased tremendously as political parties become ‘family firms competing for market shares of the electorate and access to public office’ (Anderson, 2012). This in turn strengthens vested interests with whom the local party leaders are closely connected.

Perhaps a critical role is played in this process by the new ‘God market’ (Nanda, 2011) that has been unleashed with the neoliberal era. In one household a mother lamented over the changed habits of the new generation of women, the failure to awake before sunrise, open the doors and light lamps for Goddess Lakshmi to enter. Such sentiments appear to reflect a reduction in religiosity in the everyday life of Uran. However, the increasing pomp and glitter of festivals and rise of allegiance to communal parties presents a new landscape of religiosity. Resistance to fragmentation of social structures, destruction of livelihoods and widening disparity increasingly finds outlet in the numerous **satsangs** (spiritual gatherings) to be found in the region. While equality and secularism retreat in the everyday life, a utopia of community bonding, universal tolerance and non-hierarchy is created in these gatherings. The researcher had an opportunity to participate in one such gathering of the Nirankari Mission\textsuperscript{34} that celebrates (Sant Nirankari Mandal, 2012) ‘realisation of a formless God, consciousness of the truth, peace within, universal brotherhood, peaceful coexistence and devotion’. These spiritual gatherings coexist with increasingly commercialized Hindu festivals and rituals. Does the changing socio-cultural milieu reflect adaptation to changing contexts and times or does it indicate the creation of an institutional matrix that enables Hindu nationalism to ‘embed itself deeper into the pores of the civil society, the state, and the business sector’ as alleged by Meera Nanda (2011)? More detailed research on the specific operation of the religious and spiritual institutions in Uran taluka would be required to understand the role it plays in the facilitation or suppression of sub-hegemonic spaces.

\textsuperscript{34} The Sant Nirankari Mission had its formal beginning on May 25, 1929, the day when Baba Avtar Singh Ji is said to have received ‘God-knowledge’ from Baba Buta Singh Ji. The founder of the Sant Nirankari Mission, Baba Buta Singh Ji was born in the year 1873 at Village Hudwal, Distt. Kaimalpur (Pakistan) (Sant Nirankari Mandal, 2012).
Currently there is an attempt to privatise public ventures and bring more of the hinterland under corporate control. Beginning with land already accumulated with CIDCO and the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation Ltd. (MIDC), the region has been drastically re-envisioned to maximise the advantages of an international port, upcoming airport and the proposed sea-link from Sewri to Nhava. The 2000 ha New Mumbai SEZ is contiguous with the 30,000 acres that had been proposed for acquisition for the establishment of the Maha Mumbai SEZ (MMSEZ). This project was approved in 2002 and in response one of the most significant struggles in contemporary times took place, providing evidence that fragmentation need not necessarily weaken resistance.

5.5 Corporate Land Grab and People’s Response

Establishment of these particular SEZs needs to be seen within the larger context of a process in which development has been corporatized. From the 1980s and 1990s globally networked flows of information, finance, and technology controlled by global capital have enabled newer strategies of appropriation and exploitation. In the process, space was being reorganised in various specific locales on the basis of international political economic relations and the requirements of global capital (Banerjee-Guha, Space Relations of Capital and Significance of New Economic Enclaves: SEZs in India, 2008). This was supported by advances in transport and communication technology and the creation of state-capital alliances towards the large-scale appropriation of land or land-related rights and resources by corporate bodies (White, Borras, Scoones, & Wolford, 2012). The latter phenomenon is popularly called ‘land grabbing’ and the rapid growth of large-scale land deals in recent years has led to considerable discussion on the nature, process and outcomes of such appropriation. Current processes of land accumulation have been seen by some as a manifestation of agrarian crisis while others consider it to be a contributing factor. Across the globe, land appropriation is seen to be associated with corporate investment in foodcrops (Foresight, 2010), resource extraction for fuel security (Zoomers, 2010), new environmental imperatives (Fairhead, Leach, & Scoones, 2012) such as carbon trading, creation of new financial instruments to facilitate speculative
finance and the establishment of extensive infrastructure corridors and Special Economic Zones (White, Borras, Scoones, & Wolford, 2012).

Intensified corporate takeovers of farm land, mineral bases and local production systems in the 21st century are contributing to the elimination of smallholder food production in countries of the Global South and therefore, there is growing vulnerability of rural and urban poor to rising food prices (Banerjee-Guha, 2013). Many farmers in Africa, Latin America, India, Bangladesh and China are turned into casual labourers while certain sections of the population accumulate tremendous wealth. Widening disparities are accompanied by severe environmental degradation as land and labour are exploited more extensively and rapidly. A significant feature highlighted by several researchers (Sampat, 2008) is that the state increasingly functions as promoter of corporate-led economic growth. Appropriation of land by the state in India is by no means a new phenomenon. It was done for establishment of industrial estates, townships, Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and export promotion parks (Levien, 2012) since the 1950s and 1960s. Many of these were state-developed projects and EPZs constituted limited free market experiments in an otherwise protected economy (Sampat, 2008). However, since the 1990s a substantial shift was seen in terms of increasing privatisation and entry of global capital into all economic sectors (Banerjee-Guha, 2013). Outsourcing of economic activities and labour retrenchment became the norm. In this context SEZs have become favoured by corporate entities for establishment of ‘hyper-liberalized economic enclaves’ (Levien, 2012), with minimal tariffs, taxes and regulations, in which labour laws related to minimum wages and contract labour do not apply (Banerjee-Guha, 2013).

The first SEZ policy in India was drafted in 2000 and the SEZ Act passed in 2005 in an attempt to make India globally competitive and intensify export-led economic growth (Sampat, 2008). SEZs were promoted as instruments of economic growth in which growth rates would increase rapidly, large-scale employment generation would take place and rural areas would become affluent (Banerjee-Guha, 2008). With development of infrastructure and reduction in rural-urban migration the SEZs were expected to attract investment and skills in manufacturing and technology from within the country and outside. The Act led to the sudden proliferation of SEZs after 2006 that mostly focussed
on information technology and information technology-enabled services (IT/ITES). These were mostly located around or near previously existing megacities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad with state governments competing with each other to provide cheap land, tax incentives and other facilities to attract corporate investment (Sharma, 2009). These features led to questions regarding the justification for providing incentives to an already strong economic sector, expanding a segment that was unlikely to generate new employment, and also concentrating them in metropolitan areas which would heighten existing regional inequalities (Mukhopadhyay & Pradhan, 2009).

The state of Maharashtra had more proposed SEZs than any other state within the country, with a total of 206 across seven districts, largely concentrated in Pune, Raigad, Thane and Mumbai (Mujumdar & Menezes, 2012). Drafting of the state SEZ policy began in 2001 in which drastic dilution of labour laws was proposed. The attempt to fast-track establishment of these SEZs was accompanied by controversy and grassroots protest at various sites. Resistance and political conflict led to the state’s decision to defer the passing of the Act. Modifications of other policies and introduction of new state schemes were used instead to facilitate their establishment (Mujumdar & Menezes, 2012). Policy level changes were brought through the Maharashtra State Water Policy (2003) that formally privileged industry over agriculture and the Special Township Scheme (2005) that aimed to draw farmers into the process of rapid urbanisation. Approval of the state SEZ policy was finally given by the central government in 2008, but the Act has not been passed till date.

Priority to development of such enclaves in New Mumbai and Pune began with the importance given to these areas in the ‘IT/ITES Policy 1998’ and ‘Modification of the Industrial Location Policy for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region 1998’ (Mujumdar & Menezes, 2012). This was reinforced with conceptualisation of the Mumbai-Pune-Nasik region as the ‘Golden Triangle’ of economic growth in the Maharashtra Vision 2004 document. It was visualised that the Mumbai-Pune corridor would be developed into a ‘Knowledge Corridor’ while Mumbai-Nasik would become an ‘Agro-Industries Corridor’ (Mujumdar & Menezes, 2012). With in-principle approval (DMIDC, 2014) of the Delhi-Mumbai Corridor in 2007, integrated investment and industrial investment regions of
about 200 (20,000 hectares) and 100 (10,000 hectares) square kilometres each were
delineated in which SEZs were a key component.

In keeping with this, the Maha Mumbai Integrated SEZ (MMSEZ) was proposed as a
multi-purpose SEZ that would necessitate the takeover of land from 45 villages in three
talukas (Pen, Panvel and Uran). The project sought to maximise its location vis a vis the
New Mumbai SEZ in Western Uran, the JNPT port facilities, the proposed New Mumbai
airport and Sewri-Nhava sea link. Initially the government had proposed that the
concerned private companies acquire land on their own. A few farmers sold their land
though mostly due to poverty and indebtedness. Owners who had already been alienated
from their lands through formal employment in Mumbai city and elsewhere were also
relatively easy targets for acquisition. In the colonial period also it had been found that
non-agriculturists were more ready to part with their land than a tiller of the soil
(Charlesworth, 1985). However, their failure to acquire more than a small portion of land
for the proposed project led to an active collaboration between the State and the
developers in which several legal and extra-legal interventions were made. Apart from
notices to the concerned farmers under the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, the
corporations involved in the venture hired agents in the villages from among the retired
government servants, politically influential and unemployed youth. It was discovered
(Mujumdar & Menezes, 2012) that more than 600 fraudulent land transfers had taken
place with the active connivance of officials and local informers at various levels.

The MMSEZ sought to displace farmers located in the Hetwane Dam Canal Command
Zone and a group of villages in Eastern Uran. The area was projected as poverty struck,
unirrigated and characterised by marginal holdings. Two distinct movements evolved that
took forward their struggle with very different stances (Mujumdar & Menezes, 2012).
The 22 village communities with land in the canal command area took the position of “no
acquisition” citing their location in an irrigated productive region that should be
promoted rather than destroyed. They organised under the banner of Jagtikikaran Virodhi
Krutik Samiti (Anti-Globalisation Committee) with the assistance and guidance of several
NGOs such as the National Centre for Advocacy Studies, Sarvahara Jan Andolan, Sakav
and Ankur. The second group of communities formed a joint Maha Mumbai SEZ Virodhi
Shetkari Sangharsh Samiti (Anti-SEZ Farmers’ Resistance Committee) with late Advocate Datta Patil as its President. Several local associations and organisations such as the Lok Shasan Andolan came together under this banner. They took a completely different position by not opposing the project per se but demanded an ownership stake such that the SEZ developer would lease land from them for the project and give them a share of profits made from the venture. This was perhaps an attempt to counter projections of an anti-acquisition stance as an anti-development one.

Both associations fought towards mass mobilisation and awareness building at several levels and fighting through the courts. In Western Uran the increasing fragmentation of the socio-political fabric of the study region is visible in the changing profile of those who participate in various struggles. Now it is each village, family or individual as the case may be. The reverse was true with the struggle against the MMSEZ. Many people from Western Uran went from village to village in Eastern Uran to share their experiences of acquisition and its aftermath. The point that they sought to make was the extremely unlikely possibility of justice and assured compensation from changeable private corporations when the more permanent institutions of the state had failed miserably in protecting their interests. The JVKS struggle was successful in bringing out in 2006 the first referendum of its kind in the country against SEZs due to which the state government was forced to withdraw its support for the MMSEZ. This was supplemented through legal recourse by the SEZVSSS that ended in a successful Supreme Court verdict in 2009, conceding the rejection of the MMSEZ on several technical counts including that of failure to progress within the stipulated time frame.

During the survey conducted by this researcher, respondents were asked for their preference in case there was a choice of either keeping their agricultural land or giving it up for a development project and receiving compensation for the land lost. Responses reflected the nature of fragmentation within and across communities along lines of ecological location, caste, class, gender and age of respondents. More than eighty percent chose land over compensation. There were a few who felt that ‘development’ of this type must happen and giving up their land is a necessary sacrifice for the nation. These households are mostly the upper castes of upland villages who have received
considerable benefits from development interventions in the area. This perspective also reflects the class association and linkage with the nation-building project. Those who said they preferred to keep the land, cited various reasons including the destructive nature of the development projects. The nature of destruction described by them included disruption of the village community, the joy of farming, family relations, and ecology.

Post-Independence feminisation of agriculture due to absorption of men in the formal sector was reflected in the greater rootedness of the women in land and ecology and in their desire to sustain and encourage the productive capacities of the land. The strains and stresses of the new cash economy with rising costs were expressed by many from this category. Among them, however, was a group that felt that agriculture is a livelihood with decreasing value but keeping the land would have at least ensured that they could benefit from the tremendous surge in real estate prices in the area. Many, particularly in Nagaon village, have sold their land to builders who offer them two or more flats in the new buildings constructed. Respondents felt that here at least was an option that gave them some permanent security. The necessity for formal education in the current economic landscape has led to dissociation and alienation of youth from the land. They mostly see the land as investment and a means of profit from speculation in the rising land markets. All the struggles in the region are located within the wider context of the contemporary development discourse where progress and modernity are deeply linked with industrialisation, formal education and white collar jobs. Notion of development rooted in the specific characteristics of the region that enhance and sustain the productive capacities of its ecology is found to be systematically deprioritised and destroyed.

Political understanding of the construction of the above history necessitates the reconstruction of events and processes seen from multiple perspectives. While putting together various accounts of struggles in the study region, the writing and rewriting of history from various lenses was apparent. At all levels the historians’ accounts reflect a larger political association and alliances of which they are a part. In writing on the anti-Khoti struggle, for example, Madhavi (2013) emphasises the role of local grassroots leaders and the associated dominant political party – in this case the Congress – of the time, while Omvedt (2012) typically emphasizes the role of B. R. Ambedkar along with
the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and underplays that of the local leaders who were not members of the ILP. This version is more likely to be part of official and academic record unless actively supplemented from various other sources. With no access to the wider publishing market that privileges English language writings, local authors who write in the vernacular have a very small circle of distribution. Often, as in this case, the local author becomes his own salesperson and the only distributor.

Numerous struggles in the region have had a definite impact on the socio-economic status of PAPs and developments in the area with the nature of compensation negotiated by them. Outcomes however show enormous increase in disparities as previous inequalities get enhanced. Disillusionment with the state and the nature of development has set in as promise for a better life has failed to materialize for a large section of the population. Communities such as the kolis whose livelihoods were dependent on ecological flows between land and water but had no legally recognised property rights over their commons (creeks, rivers and sea), are currently seeking multiple avenues for acknowledgement. Water bodies that are difficult to define in terms of fixed physical boundaries receive even less recognition as commons compared to grazing land and forests. Shifts in terminology and language, such as the definition of fishing as ‘farming’ the waters, are seen in their effort to push for recognition of water bodies and areas of the sea as their ‘fields’. Redefinition of the term ‘peasant’ to include fisher folk appears to be sought for in an attempt to increase their visibility. All these along with attempts to register themselves as associations and trusts are being experimented to find constitutional means to secure livelihood rights.

From the history of struggles in the study region it appears that the discourse of compensation has been forced onto the people. On the people’s part since colonial times, the trajectory of struggle shows a consistent resistance to total dispossession and displacement, rather than a ‘return’ (Patil, 2012) to the position of no acquisition as claimed by some. The demand for developed plots under the 12.5% scheme, the current negotiations by the PAPs of the proposed airport for 35% plots, and the SEZVSSS demand for an ownership stake in the proposed projects in Eastern Uran represent continuing demand to retain possession of land. Similar negotiations have been seen in
the case of Mahindra World City (Levien, 2012) on the outskirts of Jaipur city where farmers were given developed plots near the SEZ amounting to one quarter the size of their original holding in 2008. The marginal stakes given to locals as compensation have been found to privilege individual property rights over land, reinforce and sharpen pre-existing inequalities and ‘create a whole chain of rentiership that incorporates well-placed fractions of the peasantry’ (Levien, 2012, p. 942) who actively participate in the current development process. Contrary to claims by some activists (Sangvai, 2007) regarding the rejection of established ‘paradigms of technology, science, modernity and development’ by new social or people’s movements, the movements in Uran taluka and negotiations for similar stakes in other regions do not appear to oppose the nature of development initiated by state and corporate interests in a major way.

As this chapter was being written, news of various ongoing struggles came in – an entire village on dharna to protest their exclusion from the current processes, a solitary youth on a fast unto death, a regional struggle demanding adequate health care facilities in the taluka and so on. There are innumerable struggles at individual, group, community, sub-regional and regional levels that happen every day in the study region as the fight for justice continues. The following final chapter seeks to question and challenge the processes that promote commoditisation of land and its transformation from an asset of livelihood and identity to an asset of compensation that thoroughly undermines people’s participation in the development process. The consequences of systematic deprioritisation of regional spaces, their resources and ecology-based livelihoods which is an integral part of a holistic development process will also be analyzed, taking a critical look at the role of the State and its institutions in the prevailing neo-liberal framework of development.
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